

UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group
10th Meeting – Nobel House, Defra, London,
11h00; 05 June 2006
FINAL MINUTES

1. Present:

Malcolm Vincent (JNCC, Chair); Hilary Allison (LINK); Pete Brotherton (EN); Tasha Chick (JNCC, Secretariat); Liz Howe (CCW); Julian Hughes (LINK); Paul Rose (JNCC); Sarah Webster (Defra); Robin Wynde (LINK).

Apologies: Michele Calnan (WAG); Ant Maddock (JNCC); Mike Meharg (DOENI); Jim Munford (NBN); Brigid Primrose (SNH); Diana Reynolds (WAG); Richard Weyl (DOENI); Judith Young (SE).

2. Final acceptance of minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted.

3. Actions from previous BRIG meeting (Actions are attached)

Actions completed: Old Action's 16, 17; Action's 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16

Carried Forward Actions: Malcolm will speak with Diana re: Old Action 4 (new Action 1); Action 1 will be reviewed at next meeting (new Action 2); Action 6, Malcolm will write a short paper on BRIG's style (NEW Action 3); Action 10 Malcolm will chase (new Action 4).

Actions on Agenda: 14, 15 (both under 5.2)

4. Future work for BRIG

4.1 Surveillance

Agenda item 5.5, Information Gap Sub-group, was included in this discussion.

The Surveillance and Reporting strategy was JNCC's first attempt at putting together a UK framework on this topic. The paper had two objectives in relation to surveillance: to meet the needs of surveillance and reporting obligations; and to reflect the state of UK nature more accurately, including in relation to progress against the 2010 target.

In discussion a number of important issues were raised:

- i) how would the framework be developed and taken forward?
- ii) has consideration been given to NGO 'buy-in' as NGO's play a vital role in carrying out the surveillance?
- iii) fuller consideration needed to be given to the role of the 18 UK biodiversity indicators;
- iv) further consideration needs to be given to the issue of country biodiversity strategy targets;

v) while the paper envisaged systematic surveillance for priority habitats, the issue of filling gaps in relation to priority species was more problematic. The issue of how to mobilise data held by e.g. Local Record Centres was considered as a means of (partly) resolving this;

vi) the paper needed to identify future priorities more clearly.

JNCC responded that they intended a process of active stakeholder engagement in the further development of the paper during 2006, involving Government, country agencies and NGO stakeholders. The point about recognising the current involvement of NGO's in surveillance programmes would be addressed in a re-write of the paper. The paper would be progressively developed in parallel with the stakeholder process.

In relation to the issue of mobilising local data it was felt it would be useful to obtain a short summary from BARS on what currently exists; look at what is in NBN and how accessible it is; then consider how sufficient it is for what is needed. JNCC would take a coordinating lead on this and will summarise what has been reported thus far. English Nature will consider ways in which Local Record Centres can be used to influence the mobilisation of data.

Action 5: Malcolm to take into consideration BRIG's comments on Surveillance Strategy and Reporting paper

Action 6: Paul to take a coordinating role in identifying what survey information currently exists (for example in BARS, NBN *etc.*)

Action 7: Pete to consider how survey information might be addressed through Local Records Centres

4.2 Reporting

BRIG considered that the paper (BRIG0506_05) was a fair reflection off the current situation and agreed the general approach outlined in the paper. BRIG stressed that the real significance of reporting was to identify issues of significance that needed addressing. The report was a tool for identifying and prioritising future action; it was much more than an administrative process.

4.3 Feedback from COP8 and Reviewing of the UK BAP National Strategy

These two agenda items were taken together.

BRIG considered the paper circulated by JNCC on the implication of COP8 for the UK BAP.

BRIG considered the issue of the UK's role in implementing the CBD in the Overseas Territories and, indeed, in other countries more generally. At the moment Government held a stakeholder meeting, prior to each CBD COP, to which NGO's were invited, and there was usually some involvement by the Overseas Territories at the COP. However, the international side of UK CBD implementation was not supported by a strong process. Potentially this fell within the priorities on the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Biodiversity, but the Overseas Territories had not yet figured prominently on the agenda of the Group. BRIG considered that the UK BAP Standing Committee could intervene to remedy this.

BRIG considered Annex 1 of the JNCC paper which set out the guidelines provided by COP8 for the review of national strategies and plans, and discussed whether a review taking account of the issues raised in List

A in the Annex could be beneficial. BRIG recognised that CBD placed obligations on developed countries, like the UK, to achieve the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity not only in their own country but also in respect of biodiversity internationally. BRIG considered that a rapid-review exercise, using List A, which i) identified significant gaps in relation to UK implementation, and which ii) considered which of these would actually result in major benefits, if addressed, would be worthwhile.

Referring to the minutes of the last Standing Committee meeting, Sarah stated that she was charged with preparing a strategic statement relating to the future direction of UK Biodiversity for the next meeting of the Committee in October 2006. This was clearly a suitable vehicle for addressing some of these issues of future scope and process. There was sufficient information available to help to produce this paper. BRIG considered that while a short strategic statement was very desirable, it also needed to be phrased in a manner which would guide subsequent action effectively. Sarah agreed to discuss her draft paper at the next BRIG meeting, but it was acknowledged that her reporting line was direct to Standing Committee.

Action 7: Sarah to prepare draft of the Standing Committee paper on the future direction of the UK BAP for discussion at the next BRIG meeting.

5. Feedback from Sub-groups

5.1 Targets Review Sub-group

Pete apologised for the fact that the report did not conform to the standard format of BRIG papers, and sought BRIG's views on i) the future process for 'signing off' the targets, ii) the particular issue of the hedgerow target, and iii) the process for features where targets had not yet been received.

On the issue of sign-off BRIG agreed that it needed to formally sign-off the work of the Targets Review Sub-group. It considered that Pete, as Chair of the sub-group, had authority to arbitrate and determine any remaining issues of disagreement within the group, and BRIG would itself expect to consider such issues only if there was a possibility that a decision might transgress the normal procedures/principles under which the sub-group was operating.

In relation to the revision of the hedgerow targets, the hedgerow HAP group has proposed targets for all hedgerows, not just ancient and species rich, as covered by the current HAP type. They have also submitted a proposal to PSHRWG to revise the priority type to encompass all hedgerows on the basis of practicality. This view has received tacit approval by the country groups and was supported by the Targets Sub-group. However, there was a fine line between employing innovative and SMART targets, and developing targets which defacto altered the nature of the priority feature. After discussion BRIG felt that if assurance could be given that new hedgerow planting would contain an element of species-rich hedgerow, in roughly the same proportion as within the existing hedgerow component, BRIG would endorse the target.

Action 8: Pete to seek the required assurance from the hedgerow HAP group that the new hedgerow target would deliver significant benefits to the ancient/species rich hedgerow feature

On the issue of the targets still outstanding, as things stand, there will be no targets for most marine plants, gaps in some important terrestrial habitat types (e.g. Upland habitats) and no targets set for new priority habitats and species. BRIG considered that there needed to be a clear cut-off point in the process of

reviewing targets in relation to the current process, and agreed that for those features for which targets had not been reviewed and decided upon, the target would default to the previous targets with reconsideration given to the issue at the time that targets are being established for new features on the revised list (i.e. at stage 3).

In relation to the proposed timetable for completing the Targets Review, it was agreed that targets could not be posted onto the UK BAP website until after Ministerial approval had been received (i.e. after October).

Action 9: Ant to amend the publication date of targets review on the timetable to after ministerial sign off

5.2 Species and Habitats Review Sub-group; formation of new group

BRIG discussed the composition of the new Species and Habitats Review Sub-group, recognising that, with regards the country groups there was a need to incorporate both policy and scientific perspectives, and that both country agencies and Government Administrations may wish to send representation to the sub-group. BRIG recognised that a group of 10 people would likely be more manageable than a group of 16, but felt that an attendance level in excess of two-thirds per meeting was an unlikely occurrence in practice. On balance BRIG decided that a sub-group should comprise:

8 representatives from country groups; 2 LINK representatives; 3 representatives from the three main PSHRWG groups (marine, species, habitats); 1 UK representative; 1 Chair; 1 Secretariat.

However BRIG did not wish to impose a burden on Steve Lee Bapty, Chair of the group, and if he felt uncomfortable with the size of the sub-group, and if after further discussion with the 4 countries he felt able to reduce the representation from the country groups, then he should be able to use his discretion to do so.

5.3 2005 Reporting Sub-group

Robin gave an oral report informing the group that the 2005 Reporting leaflet would be published in time for the UK Biodiversity Partnership conference on 20 June. The PDF has been received from the designers and comments have been made. Once the design has been finalised the leaflet will be circulated to BRIG.

The web based report has not made as much progress as ideally it would have. As such it is anticipated that the website will not be fully completed by the time of the conference, but any gaps would be subsequently updated. There was much work to be done over the next few weeks.

Robin added that LBAPs are to be thanked for their contributions and they should be shown how the information will be used. Also where LBAPs have said they want more information from specific lead partners this needs to be fed back to those lead partners.

In discussion it became clear that there had been misunderstanding concerning the website. At the moment JNCC were not designing the website with drill down capability, as that was considered too expensive, instead there would be a telephone point of contact for further information. However the sub-group had not been aware of this and was preparing a detailed web report with a series of pie charts and drill down capability. There was a clear need to resolve this issue.

Action 10: Paul, Robin and Pete to discuss the drill down capability of the 2005 report on the UK BAP website.

BRIG considered the report does not provide much analysis in terms of the causes of change, and the countries would need to undertake this analysis themselves. While JNCC would do some analysis this would not be at a sufficient level of detail to meet the need, and it was suggested that JNCC work with the countries to help them become familiar with the data.

Action 11: Ant to coordinate familiarising the countries with the 2005 Reporting data

5.4 Climate Change Sub-group

Hilary asked the meeting to provide comments to her on the Climate Change paper as soon as possible (within the next 2 or 3 weeks). Comments will then be incorporated in one edit and the paper will then be taken to Standing Committee. Comments had been received from most of the organisations that are represented on BRIG if not from the actual BRIG members themselves, but comments from others were still welcome.

There was some discussion on the audience for the report, it had been intended for site managers but it was recognised that effectiveness of site action was also dependent on policy measures taken at the landscape level. BRIG considered that it was appropriate for the paper to reflect this dependency, while recognising that the policy implications would need to be considered.

5.5 Information Gap Sub-group

Discussed under item 4.1

5.6 Review timeline update

For 2005 Reporting, Robin explained the analysis and report production has slipped a month and will need to be moved to the end of July.

The Priority Species and Habitats Review timeline is significantly out of date and will be updated when the new group is set up.

The Target Review timeline will also need to be amended.

Action 12: Ant to liaise with sub-group chairs over updating the timeline and send out revised version

6. Standing Items

6.1 Standing Committee Actions

Regarding the action under 2.1, offers of assistance to complete the publication of headline indicators, JNCC are currently in mid-discussion with Andy Stott on this issue.

Concerning the press release of the 2005 Report, Pete has a contact with the Observer that he will pass to Phil.

Action 13: Concerning the headline indicators, Pete to pass on details of the Observer journalist to Phil prior to the UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference

6.2 BRAG

Terms of Reference have now been agreed, there is a BRAG meeting on 8 June and, following this, JNCC will email the Terms of Reference to BRIG members.

Action 14: Paul to email the BRAG ToR to BRIG members

6.3 Country Groups

England

The report for England had been circulated with the Agenda of the meeting.

Barry Gardiner has replaced Jim Knight as Minister for Biodiversity, Landscape and Rural Affairs.

Martin Brasher has become Head of Wildlife, Habitats and Biodiversity Division.

Wales

New environment strategy has been launched.

Staff within WAG has changed; Diana Reynolds is now responsible for Biodiversity.

Scotland

No representative at meeting

Northern Ireland

No representative at meeting

6.4 NBN

Pete provided an update on NBN in Jim's absence.

One of the NBN priorities over the coming year is to develop web capabilities of NBN. A facility to allow people to draw upon NBN data and show it on their own websites is being developed; the possibility of combining this with BARS data on actions / targets alongside NBN distributions is also being investigated.

6.5 BARS

Over the summer BARS will develop a more user-friendly interface with easier access to area data and what is happening in different regions. It is hoped this will encourage people to add information to the system and to be selective about the information that they put in.

There has also been an approach made by somebody from Brighton who wants to add an interface to BARS which will allow schools to add to BARS information from their conservation work. This would be kept distinct from UK Reporting. This could be a way of raising the profile and will be discussed with the BARS advisory group.

6.6 Review of Standing Items

Malcolm asked if the members of the meeting found the standing items section of the agenda useful. It was agreed that it was a useful way in which to catch up but the section should be kept brief. There would be advantage in very brief written reports being sent out with the papers; these would then act as information sources and any discussion could be 'by exception'. If a group had not met since BRIG's last meeting, that item could be removed from that agenda.

Action 15: A short note on all Standing Items to be sent in advance of each BRIG meeting, or alternatively to advise Ant where there had been no new developments.

7. Any other Business

Hilary Allison informed the group that she will be stepping down as a LINK representative at BRIG, but would ensure there would be a replacement. Hilary asked if she could continue to participate at BRIG as chair of the Climate Change Sub-group. On behalf of BRIG Malcolm thanked Hilary for her contributions to BRIG and BRIG would be pleased for her to continue to participate as chair of the Climate Change sub-group.

8. Date of next meeting

14th September 2006

UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group

10th Meeting: 05 June 2006

ACTIONS

- Action 1:** Review the paper (BRIG1104_7_Looking forward) at the next meeting
- Action 2:** Michele to circulate Diana's contact details to BRIG – Malcolm will contact Diana
- Action 3:** Paul to write a short paper on BRIG's style – Malcolm will now take this forward as the new chair of the group
- Action 4:** The habitats group to ensure that the habitats that meet the criteria are selected and not to consider the delivery mechanisms (HAPS). The evidence for these selections needs to be provided in the Quality Assurance that is underway – Malcolm will follow this up
- Action 5:** Malcolm to take into consideration BRIG's comments on Surveillance Strategy and Reporting paper.
- Action 6:** Paul to take a coordinating role in identifying what survey information currently exists (for example in BARS, NBN *etc.*)
- Action 7:** Pete to consider how survey information might be addressed through Local Records Centres
- Action 8:** Sarah to prepare draft of the Standing Committee paper on the future direction of the UK BAP for discussion at the next BRIG meeting.
- Action 9:** Pete to seek the required assurance from the hedgerow HAP group that the new hedgerow target would deliver significant benefits to the ancient/species rich hedgerow feature
- Action 10:** Ant to amend the publication date of targets review on the timetable to after ministerial sign off
- Action 11:** Paul, Robin and Pete to discuss the drill down capability of the 2005 report on the UK BAP website.
- Action 12:** Ant to coordinate familiarising the countries with the 2005 Reporting data
- Action 13:** Ant to liaise with sub-group chairs over updating the timeline and send out revised version
- Action 14:** Concerning the headline indicators, Pete to pass on details of the Observer journalist to Phil prior to the UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference
- Action 15:** Paul to email the BRAG ToR to BRIG members
- Action 16:** A short note on all Standing Items to be sent in advance of each BRIG meeting, or alternatively to advise Ant where there had been no new developments.

	2004						2005												2006											
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2005 Reporting	Preparation of questions to be asked in the 2005 Reporting Round												Lead Partner & LBAP reporting			Analysis and summary report production						web report								
	BARS on general release →																													
Priority Species and Habitat Review	Specialist groups consulted over development of criteria for selecting priority species						Working with Terrestrial and Freshwater Species expert groups to undertake Stage 1 assessments																		Stage 2 consideration: illustrative example; hand over to new group					
													Practical issue consideration stage																	
				Adapt existing Marine criteria for use in the Species and Habitat Review			Working with Marine Species and Habitat expert groups to undertake Stage 1 assessments																							
	Priority habitat review and consultation (Stage 1)																													
Target Review	Lead Partners and steering groups propose new or revised targets. (NB This has been extended due to late submissions)												Targets endorsed by Country Groups/Lead Partners & refined based on 2005 report												Targets agreed then Ministerial approval in Oct		New targets on UK BAP website and BARS			
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	2004						2005												2006											

Figure 1. Main BRIG milestones. The main sub-group work programmes as listed on the left and the details of the work within these sub-groups is listed in the body of the Figure.