

**UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group**  
**15<sup>th</sup> Meeting – 21 January 2008**  
**Nobel House, Defra, London**  
**MINUTES**

**1. Present**

Joanna Drewitt (SE)

Matt Shardlow (LINK)

Liz Howe (CCW)

Malcolm Vincent (JNCC, Chair)

Nicola Hutchinson (LINK)

Ruth Waters (NE)

Ant Maddock (JNCC, Secretariat)

Sarah Webster (Defra)

Greg Mudge (SNH)

Richard Weyl (DOENI)

Paul Rose (JNCC)

It was noted that Pete Brotherton would be replaced on BRIG by Ruth Waters (NE), Julian Hughes by Nicola Hutchinson (LINK) and Michelle Calnan by Bill Somerfield (WAG).

**2. Final acceptance of minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the 14<sup>th</sup> BRIG meeting were accepted once LINK's comments on the forward process paper were incorporated with the other comments.

**3. Actions from previous BRIG meeting (see attached)**

Actions 4 – 6, and 8 -10 were completed and Actions 3 and 7 were on the agenda.

1: Development of BRIG communication Strategy. Julian has left RSPB HQ and therefore was not in a position to carry out his communications action. However, Standing Committee has also recognised the need for communications expertise on BRIG. BRIG felt that a person who both understood the business of the UK BAP as well as having communications expertise would be a useful member. Hillary Alison was considered a person who may fit this role.

**ACTION 1:** LINK members to ask Hillary Alison if she would be prepared to fill a communications role on BRIG. Other members to consider any other people who may have both communications and UK BAP expertise who could become a member of BRIG.

2: 2005 Reporting Round information – carried over.

**ACTION 2:** Malcolm to consider how best to make available the detailed results of the 2005 reporting round at a UK level (carried over)

At the September BRIG meeting, after the presentation on Local Records Centres by Richard Alexander, questions were raised about taxonomic coverage of LRC data and support for National Schemes underpinning LRCs. BRIG agreed to discuss this in more detail.

**ACTION 3:** Discussion on National Schemes and Societies to be placed on the BRIG agenda for the meeting after the one in March 2008

#### **4. Report back from November Standing Committee meeting**

##### BRIG Forward process paper

At the November meeting, Standing Committee discussed the Forward Process paper from BRIG. Recommendations from the paper were organised into eight steps which are listed below.

Step 1: Brigading Habitats into Groups

Step 2: BRIG confirmation of species requiring specific management, following signposting exercise

Step 3: Role of Lead Partners in identifying and reporting on priority species requiring management beyond Habitat Action Plans.

Step 4: Wider Actions – to be owned by the country groups

Step 5: Transitional arrangements

Step 6: Success criteria

Step 7: Surveillance and monitoring

Step 8: Research

BRIG commented that, within England, Natural England would be the Lead Delivery body that would determine what action would be taken for species requiring specific management action. There were so many such priority species in England, England will deal with this problem as best they can.

Actions relating to several of these steps were on the BRIG meeting agenda.

##### 2008 Reporting Round

The 2008 Reporting Round and the 2010 targets were also discussed by Standing Committee. It was planned to revise the *Biodiversity Indicators in your Pocket* booklet in 2008 (using, in part, data gathered from the 2008 Reporting Round) and send this information to the CBD secretariat in 2009. These data would also be updated on the website.

The UK was to prepare a model for use in structuring the conclusions in the fourth CBD National Report. Discussion on this within the UK is ongoing.

EU BAP commission in its autumn 2007 meeting agreed that there would be a mid-term review of data in mid 2008. John Robbs had written to the EU commission indicating that the UK would not be able to provide any new data until January 2009.

##### Communications

Standing Committee discussed the UK BAP conference under the subject of communications. It was agreed that this Conference would run back-to-back with the Wales Conference on 9 September 2008 and the working theme was integrating biodiversity and sustainable development.

##### BRIG Terms of Reference

Standing Committee discussed BRIG's Terms of Reference in which it was stated that the membership of BRIG should mirror that of Standing Committee. However, BRIG has received an application from Scottish LINK requesting to join BRIG. Although this would mean that BRIG and Standing Committee membership was not entirely the same, no-one had objections to Scottish LINK becoming members BRIG. It was noted that although LINK organisations have developed in Scotland and Wales, to the extent that there were LINK

groups in all four countries, there was also a Joint LINK group at a UK level where LINK worked together. It was this Joint LINK group that took a lead on the Species and Habitat Review.

**ACTION 4:** Invite Scottish LINK to join BRIG and ask Standing Committee to do the same

## **5. Species & Habitat Priorities Review**

### **5.1 Country Habitat Groups**

The role of the habitat groups was to:

- set guidelines for the habitat targets for each priority habitat so that the countries could apply these guidelines to setting country targets
- the UK habitat group would merge the country targets into a UK target
- the country groups would report on these targets and the UK group would merge these data into a progress report for the UK
- UK groups to set guidelines to facilitate the work of the country groups (e.g. the nature of targets required, setting condition standards)

Countries noted that there were no guidelines to setting condition standards and this was proving to be a problem. It was agreed that guidelines would be set at a UK level by the UK habitat groups.

It was suggested that the Terms of Reference for each group be kept open at the moment because better information may become available e.g. if remote sensing of habitats became feasible it would probably be done at a UK level because of the high cost. Also, it was suggested that existing habitat groups that were working well (e.g. lowland heathland) could continue to operate but feed into the relevant Habitat Group.

There was general agreement among the countries in grouping priority habitats into Farmland, Woodland, Upland, Coastal and Marine groups. There was some discrepancy with the Freshwater groups; some countries placed all lakes, ponds, wetlands and rivers in one group while other countries split the grouping into Wetlands and Lakes and Ponds.

It was agreed that the colour coding in the paper to BRIG be accepted, that the following UK Habitat Groups would be established;

1. Farmland (including lowland heathland)
2. Woodland
3. Upland (including upland heathland)
4. Coastal
5. Marine
6. Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land
7. Wetlands – to have meetings run congruently with Lakes and Ponds to allow people to attend both
8. Lakes and Ponds – to have meeting run congruently with Wetlands to allow people to attend both and that Terms of Reference be established for these groups.

**ACTION 5:** JNCC to prepare a paper for the next meeting describing the rules of procedure and the Terms of Reference for these 8 UK Habitat Groups

## 5.2 Consultation data

The deadline for the experts to submit their data to BRIG was extended from 1 February 2008 to 29 February 2008 for the fish, invertebrate and vascular plants groups. Other groups said they would be ready by 1 February and should send in their data by the original deadline.

BRIG agreed that JNCC would quality assure the data but that the experts, who were best qualified to do this, should have an opportunity to apply criteria to the selection of species specific actions. JNCC will prepare the criteria and send them to the expert group contacts as soon as possible.

**ACTION 6:** Ant to draft the species action selection criteria and circulate these to BRIG before liaising with the expert contacts on how to apply these criteria to the species

## 5.3 Research

There was concern within BRIG that the process described in the paper (BRIG210108 UK BAP research framework) would not deal with single species or habitat research adequately. It was also noted that the country research strategies needed to be incorporated into this work. One of the roles of BRAG is to identify research funders and broker research partnerships. The first task of the proposed BRIG-BRAG research working group will be to put into place actions that will achieve this.

BRIG agreed that a BRIG-BRAG research working group meeting be organised at which a process to deal with the research needs of the UK BAP be decided. The five actions in the paper should be set as aims and a process developed for meeting these aims:

1. develop spreadsheet entries in order to frame a clear research question, where possible
2. categorise research and, if possible, identify priorities for action
3. specify a research timeframe
4. identify possible research funders
5. estimate cost of delivery

The work on UK BAP research actions may take about a year to do and may involve a contractor.

**ACTION 7:** BRIG members to nominate representatives to form the BRIG BRAG research working group by the end of January 2008

**ACTION 8:** Richard Ferris (BRAG) to organise workshop sometime in March to establish a process to deal with the UK BAP research needs

## 5.4 Surveillance and Monitoring Strategy

Lawrence presented this paper by speaker phone pointing out that this paper dealt with overall surveillance while the paper sent to BRIG in December 2007 dealt with surveillance and UK BAP species. Lawrence asked BRIG to comment on the objectives in the current paper that would be incorporated into a paper that would be sent to Standing Committee in April 2008. The following comments were received:

- GB Programme Board on Non-native Species is planning to monitor invasive non-native species and Lawrence could liaise with Ian Maclean who is familiar with this work.
- There are several NGOs with species and habitat surveillance and monitoring data. Contacting the relevant NGOs and having some dialogue with them may be useful.

- An original driver for this work was to fill the gaps in the UK BAP surveillance and the strategy should aim to fill these gaps. However, the paper that was being prepared for the Standing Committee meeting would not list individual schemes but would provide a process that would do this.
- There needs to be a link between the results of the surveillance and research so that a better idea of the pressures on biodiversity could be obtained.
- If possible, the strategy needs to link to survey programmes like the Environment Change Network.
- The programme is ambitious, there is a lot to do and some problems are intractable but JNCC is the body to do this work. Perhaps breaking the work into smaller bits will help progress the work.
- The survey paper sent to BRIG in December 2007 had some gaps in the list of surveillance schemes. If the NGOs were contacted these gaps could be filled.
- An objective of this paper is to determine cost effective survey that will achieve the objectives and meet the needs of the users (for example, the relatively small size of Northern Ireland means it has problems with small sample sizes). A suite of sampling options will be employed to do this.

Lawrence to send Matt a list of those NGOs who are involved in survey work so that LINK can comment on this and fill any gaps.

**ACTION 9:** Jessa Battersby (JNCC) to contact Matt to get the consultation process on the main schemes spreadsheet underway and to sure all the relevant schemes are in our detailed spreadsheet

**ACTION 10:** Matt to identify who within Link had technical expertise to comment on the Surveillance Strategy and JNCC to organise consultation or an event at which LINK could consider the strategy

**ACTION 11:** Lawrence to prepare a paper on general surveillance and monitoring for BRIG at the next meeting and for the next meeting of Standing Committee

## 5.5 Lead Partners

The role of Lead Partners was still being discussed. The Standing Committee had only agreed that lead delivery bodies were likely to find it helpful to identify a Lead Partner to facilitate delivery of specific management actions for species requiring these. LINK is preparing a paper on the issue of the Lead Partner role for species and habitats. LINK explained that having Lead Partners was essential for NGOs as it engages them with the UK BAP process. NGOs advertise the Lead Partner role to funders and to the public which are of value to them.

**ACTION 12:** LINK to send the Lead Partner role paper to BRIG for next meeting. This paper will be a draft and will be submitted without prejudice

## 5.6 Habitat definitions

Three habitats (Oligotrophic and Dystrophic Lakes, Rivers, and Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Disturbed Land) had some work to be done when the UK List of Priority Species and Habitats was published in August 2007. BRIG agreed that the definitions provided in the paper (BRIG210108 Finalising Habitat Definitions), for all three habitats were probably enough to define these habitats. Further work outlined in the paper should be taken forward as part of the work of the respective groups.

Oligotrophic and Dystrophic Lakes – BRIG agreed that a definition based on the three tiers in the Lakes database should be used. (Tier 1 - conservation for best sites; Tier 2 - restoration for damaged sites which

have biodiversity interest and the capacity to respond to measures; Tier 3 - prevention of further deterioration for the remainder of sites).

Rivers – BRIG agreed the nine stages outlined in the Annex to the paper should be used as the definition.

Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Disturbed Land – the Defra contract should develop a definition as soon as possible as part of this contract.

**ACTION 13:** The Open Mosaic Habitats group to send the definition to both LINK and BRIG for comment and sign off by BRIG

### **5.7 Success criteria**

BRIG agreed that linking the mechanism for removal of species from the UK List of Priority Species and Habitats and the selection criteria used to identify the species onto this list was useful but more thinking needs to be done on this. It was also asked if there was a need to do this now or could we wait a few months. Although it was felt that setting targets focussed attention on measuring progress, this could be done using a combination of success criteria and surveillance.

**ACTION 14:** JNCC to prepare a paper for next meeting outlining a process for describing how success criteria can be linked to the selection criteria

### **5.8 2008 Reporting Round**

BRIG agreed that the meeting with the Defra Statisticians concerning the 2008 Reporting data and the 2010 targets data should go ahead with the people listed in the BRIG paper (BRIG210108 2008 Reporting Round proposal updated) namely (Robin Wynde, Pete Brotherton, Phil Lewis, Stephen Hall/Rocky Harris, Mark Stevenson, James Williams, Ant Maddock, Ed Mackey, Richard Weyl, David Allen).

In addition, option 2 presented in the paper where this group plus one or two additional BRIG members, would form a virtual 2008 Reporting Round Group. This group would manage the reporting round by phone, email and teleconference. LINK needs to nominate a member for this group and Brigid Primrose volunteered to be the Scotland representative. [Secretariat note: Secretariat will invite someone from BARS to join the group.] Finally, the reporting round would be run as done in 2005.

**ACTION 15:** LINK to nominate a representative to join the 2008 Reporting Round virtual group

**ACTION 16:** A BARS representative to be nominated to the 2008 Reporting Round virtual group

### **5.9 Statement and new list species**

The proposal in the paper (BRIG210108 2008 Reporting Round proposal updated) that the status and trend of statement species should be reported on only if they were included in the new UK List of Priority Species and Habitats was accepted.

In addition, the proposal that JNCC gather baseline data for new species and habitats from the Species and Habitat Review data and other sources was accepted as well.

**ACTION 17:** JNCC to compile the status and trend data on all new UK List of Priority Species and Habitats as a baseline set of data.

### **5.10 Linking species expertise and the Habitat Groups**

**ACTION 18:** JNCC to write a paper for next meeting describing a processes whereby the species expertise can be linked with the species needs into the habitat groups

### **6. Standing items**

#### BARS

Ruth provided a report on BARS which is appended to these minutes.

#### Country Reports

The reports from Scotland and England were accepted.

### **7. Any other business**

None

### **8. Next meeting**

Wednesday 12 March 2008, London. Venue to be decided.

## UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group

### 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting: 21 January 2008

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## **BARS UPDATE**

### **Latest Developments**

The current development phase is nearing completion and will be available on the BARS website by the end of the financial year. New features will include enhancements to the public pages to improve access to and the range of information available to public users. For registered users new features will include “labels”, a functionality which will enable users to create a series of “flags” for actions, for example an organisation could create flags to identify which of their grant funds is funding an action (project). Further new features include the ability to upload advice and information documents, which will be publicly available through new searches on the public site. Also included within the current development are further enhancements to the data entry application and custom reports in response to user feedback. Work is also underway to add the Northern Ireland plans to the system, it is hoped these will be available on the live site soon.

### **Training & Engagement**

A programme of training events is ongoing with an average of 2 training events a month. Uptake of the system has been good, this has been helped in part by an increasing number of organisations and grant schemes (including: Countdown2010 (NE), Aggregates Levy (NE), Species Recovery Fund (NE), SITA, Species Challenge Fund (CCW), GrantScape (considering)) making the use of BARS a condition of their funding. Non-training events have included a workshop held to look to agree a protocol/statement for commitment to the use of BARS by national organisations and the reporting priorities of these, the outcomes of this workshop are to be circulated in the coming month.

### **Future Priorities**

The BARS advisory group have agreed a set of priorities for training and development for the coming year. Priorities for training include a programme of “train the trainer” events intended to help build capacity for BARS training within the UK. Forthcoming training events include a series of events for EBS workstream contacts to help with the transition from paper based to online reporting for the EBS. HAP and SAP groups will be offered training and support prior to and during this year’s national reporting round. Updating the national reporting round functionality for the 2008 round is a development priority for this year, this will be developed/updated once any changes to questions asked previously have been agreed and signed off. Any development required to accommodate delivery of the new list will be commissioned once this has been agreed,

Megan Ellershaw , 17 January 2008