

**UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee**  
**5<sup>th</sup> April 2006**  
**Minutes**

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**Present**

Mark Avery	RSPB		
Bob Brown	NIBG	Joanna Robertson	CCW
Peter Costigan	NRRASU	Paul Rose	JNCC
Susan Davies	SNH	Graham Seymour	DOENI
Keith Duff	EN	Sarah Webster	WHB, Defra
Martin Harper	WCL	Robin Wynde	RSPB
Steve Lee-Bapty	WHB, Defra	Eric Blencowe	WSC, Defra
John Mason	SE	Paula Hendy	minutes

**Apologies**

Michael Dunn	}	
David Parker	}	represented by Joanna Robertson
Mike Meharg		
Andy Stott		
Hilary Thompson		

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**1 Welcome**

- 1.1 The chair welcomed all present and especially John Mason, Head of Scottish Executive's Environment Group, and Robin Wynde, guest speaker to present draft of the UK BAP progress report.

**2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

- 2.1 Action Point 3.10, arising from meeting in September, tasked Andrew Stott with providing the Standing Committee estimated costs relating to resources needed in order to complete publication of headline indicators by end of 2006.

Andrew had prepared paper UKBPSC 06-02 which was read in his absence. It had been agreed that Defra would fund the work from the Wildlife and Research Programme budget for 06/07 allowing procurement to proceed over the next few weeks. It should be noted that proposed timetable has slipped with publication now expected in first quarter of 2007. An update, to include indicators to be developed, is scheduled for 2008.

Andrew is seeking 'resource' contributions (through staff, data, etc).

**Action Point: Any comments regarding specification, or offers of assistance, to be with Andrew Stott by 26th May 2006.**

- 2.2 Action points 4.6 Report from Climate Change Sub-group, 5.6 Report from BRIG (Targets Review Group), 5.13.1, 2 & 3 Report from BRIG (Priority Species & Habitats Review Group) and 5.19 Report from BRIG (Information Gap Sub-group) to be covered on the agenda under report from BRIG.
- 2.3 Action point 7.5 to be covered under agenda item on Partnership Conference
- 2.4 Action point 8.7 to be covered under agenda item number 4.

*Please note: agenda items were taken in a different order so that substantive items could be given priority. Therefore items do not appear in same order as they do on the agenda.*

### **3 Report from BRIG**

- 3.1 Robin Wynde, Chairman of the 2005 reporting group, presented draft report on progress (outcome of the 2005 reporting round). Copy of the powerpoint presentation will be circulated with these minutes.

**Action Point: Committee asked to comment on suggested contents of draft leaflet. Comments to go directly to Robin Wynde (robin.wynde@rspb.org.uk)**

- 3.2 Brian Harding thanked Robin and his group on behalf of the Standing Committee for all their hard work.
- 3.3 The group were concerned as to whether it was possible fully to "drill down" from the summary statistics in the report to more detailed information on drivers. Robin replied that it was the intention to make all information that was used in producing the report available to the country groups, noting that some would not be quantifiable but would be reliant upon an expert or steering groups' judgement.
- 3.4 Brian Harding confirmed that the draft was along the right lines but felt that the main messages needed to be drawn out in readiness as publicity material.

**Action Point: Secretariat to take lead in preparing key messages**

- 3.5 The group felt strongly that we should seek as much publicity as possible noting this could be achieved through a co-ordinated, joined up effort. It was essential, therefore, that all administrations, etc should be kept in the loop with regards to press coverage.
- 3.6 Robin confirmed that final draft report would be circulated by end of April giving sufficient time for feedback by the Standing Committee. He stressed that the report must be with the printers by 19<sup>th</sup> May.

**Action Point: Following circulation of report, Committee members are requested to send feedback directly to Robin Wynde.**

### **3.7 Targets Review Group**

Delays in receiving revised targets from lead partners had caused slippage in the timetable for the Targets Review. To avoid any further delays as a result of the Country-level consultation process, Country representatives on the Standing

Committee were asked to provide the required impetus to ensure that responses are received by the Targets Review Group on schedule.

- 3.8 Brian Harding urged that the UKSC members to do what they could to ensure that the timetable was adhered to.
- 3.9 The Standing Committee were asked to note the proposal in the Country Group consultation that marine habitats and species targets should be left unchanged at this stage.
- 3.10 With regard to the development of marine targets, the Targets Review Group detailed two options. The first option would be for BRIG to work with lead partners to develop marine UK BAP targets, once the Marine Bill and related Ecosystem Objectives work has reached a stage where targets can be set based on these objectives. The second option would be to contract out the development of these targets. These would then be built into the implementation mechanisms to be proposed following the priority and habitats species review. The Standing Committee were asked how best to proceed.
- 3.12 The Committee agreed that, at this stage, the marine habitats and species targets should remain unchanged. However, the committee members wished to note their concerns with regard to addressing the targets for marine area. It was suggested that policy colleagues should be invited to prepare a note detailing the Marine Bill timetable and how development of marine targets would map onto this timetable. UKSC would return to this issue again at the next meeting.

**Action Point: Secretariat to approach marine policy leads to request timetable for Marine Bill, Ecosystem Objectives, and subsequent marine BAP targets.**

**3.13 Priority Species and Habitats Review Group**

Paul Rose presented report for group in Ant Maddock's absence. He noted that the group were at a critical stage with the first phase of work coming to an end. They were looking to complete slightly later than anticipated but slight slippage to timetable was not a cause for concern.

- 3.14 Three issues were referred to the Standing Committee:

Committee asked to comment on the purpose and proposals paper written by Paul Rose and Sarah Webster, and to approve the reconstitution of PHSRWG, and approve the presentation of PHSRWG work to the Partnership Conference in Ireland in June.

- 3.15 The Standing Committee agreed that the sub-group should continue the work.
- 3.16 The Standing Committee were asked to take note of the dates and sequence in which the priority lists of species and habitats will be completed.
- 3.17 BRIG requested that the committee appoint a chair for the PSHRWG as a matter of urgency.

- 3.18 The committee confirmed its approval of Steve Lee-Bapty as new chair of the PSHRWG replacing Gy Ovenden, who has now left his post in Defra's Rural Development Service.
- 3.19 Steve Lee-Bapty presented ideas to the Committee for taking the group forward. He fully agreed with the need to categorise the list of species, regardless of size; the type of target set should be dependent on type of action needed; and agreed to look at the list and categorising as discussed (Research Management, Trial Management, Recovery Management, Sustainable Management or some similar set of categories). Where recovery management was the required course, there was often an alternative to the automatic writing of a single species action plan; this could involve 'piggy-backing' on other policies or initiatives such as climate change mitigation or the Water Framework Directive.
- 3.20 Mark Avery reminded the group that the UK BAP began as a partnership and represented a new approach to conservation characterised by major involvement of the NGO sector. A lot of people who do not work in the statutory sector are very enthused by the UK BAP. Mark felt it was important for the committee to note that any changes decided upon would have an effect on a lot of people who feel passionate about what they do. It was suggested that we do need targets for most things but not necessarily long and involved action plans (sometimes it's enough just to say that a certain species needs to be monitored). This would reflect a 'maturing' of the system. Mark felt it would be wrong not to have targets for all species, as this would disenfranchise the species that weren't lucky enough to be included the first time around.
- 3.21 It was agreed that there needed to be a combination of (a) targets in the form of criteria that represented the point where a species could be removed from the list, and (b) SMART targets which related to the specific actions planned.
- 3.22 Brian Harding felt it would be useful if Steve Lee-Bapty were to circulate a note to the committee, broadly setting out his workplan for the sub-group. He suggested that Steve also prepare a report for the committee for meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> October.

**Action Point: Steve Lee-Bapty to circulate proposals for the future work of PHSRWG**

**Action Point: Steve to prepare report for UKSC meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> October**

**Action Point: Any comments or further thoughts/ideas regarding targetry and action plans should be emailed to Steve Lee-Bapty**

- 3.23 Committee discussed the name of the resulting list. It was agreed that the list will be known as the draft UKBAP list of Species and Habitats, with the word 'draft' being dropped once the list has been published.

**Action Point: Secretariat to consider the possibility of arranging an additional meeting of the UKSC between now and October.**

### **3.24 Climate Change**

The draft report on climate change adaptation had been circulated to BRIG and would come to Standing Committee subsequently. There were no issues referred to the UK Standing Committee by the Climate Change sub-group.

### **3.25 Information Gap sub-group**

The Standing Committee was asked to discuss the overview and considerations section in the draft paper and feed back comments.

3.26 Brian raised concern as he had thought this was something that JNCC were responsible for.

3.27 Paul Rose explained that JNCC had developed a surveillance and monitoring strategy that had been agreed by their committee, and although this had not focussed specifically on priority species and habitats, there was scope for further development of the priority species and habitats elements within the strategy. Paul stressed that the JNCC support unit was bound by the decisions of the Joint Committee in terms of what they could deliver on monitoring UK BAP priorities

**Action Point: JNCC to submit a paper to UKSC on how to take forward work to fill the information gap. UKSC to discuss this at their next meeting**

## **4 The UK Partnership Conference, Belfast**

4.1 Paper UKBPSC 06-06 detailed proposed programme and objectives for the fourth Annual Biodiversity Partnership Conference due to be held on 20th and 21st June at the Waterfront Hall, Belfast.

**Action Point: Members of the Standing Committee to notify the Secretariat of anyone they wish to add to the mailing list to ensure they receive details of the conference.**

## **5 The Future Direction of UK Biodiversity (agenda item 4)**

5.1 At the UK Standing Committee meeting in September, the committee had requested a scoping paper on the way forward for UK Biodiversity work beyond the current UKBAP review. Paper UKBPSC 06-03 was circulated to the committee prior to meeting.

5.2 Brian Harding raised the issue of how we deal with overseas territories as part of the UK process. It was felt that the International Species Branch of the Wildlife Species Conservation Division (WSCD) might be able to assist. To this end, the Secretariat had asked WSCD representative, Eric Blencowe, to attend this meeting.

5.3 Eric informed the committee that the matter of overseas territories was not scheduled for discussion at the next meeting of the Interdepartmental Ministerial Group and stressed it was highly unlikely that it would appear on the agenda.

5.4 Brian Harding asked if a recommendation from the UKSC would carry enough weight to enable overseas territories to make it onto the agenda. Eric confirmed that he would pass on the recommendation.

- 5.5 Bob Brown mentioned that JNCC were in the process of preparing an overarching paper at the same time as we were preparing the Future Direction for UK Biodiversity paper. Felt it was important that we only had one overarching framework to work to.
- 5.6 Brian suggested the preparation of a relatively short strategic statement along the lines of the Sustainable Development Framework. The Committee agreed it was important that we capture the work done so far and present a compelling story for the future, and that we should link into the work being carried out by JNCC.

**Action Point: Secretariat to draft initial framework to be circulated to committee prior to next meeting of UKSC.**

**Action Point: Secretariat to produce more detailed timeline that includes expected publication dates. This will allow us to prepare an effective communications plan to the end of 2006.**

## **6 Report from BRAG**

- 6.1 Peter Costigan presented paper UKBPSC06-05, a review of the role and performance of the UK Biodiversity Research Group.
- 6.2 The paper raised the questions:
- Should UK BRAG continue?
  - What actions are recommended to improve effectiveness?
- 6.3 It was felt that BRAG had been given an impossible task as it was not an executive body, and there was some inevitable frustration about its lack of influence over some of the funding levers. However, it was agreed that there would still be a need for a forum such as BRAG, if the group did not exist.
- 6.4 Peter felt there was a need for BRAG and that it should continue its programme of work. He stressed BRAG needed to know what its remit should be, and how they could operate more effectively given limited resources.
- 6.5 There were suggestions that more money needed to be invested into research monitoring species and habitat action plans but unsure as to whether the new TOR for BRAG would deliver required outcomes.
- 6.6 Paul commented that BRAG achieved a great deal within Europe and was well respected indicating that they were very useful from a broad agenda point of view but perhaps not quite so successful from a UK standpoint.
- 6.7 Brian noted that the current TOR does not sufficiently capture what BRAG is all about and what it can do. He suggested the formation of a small sub-group to discuss what the rationale for BRAG should be, to give it a greater chance of success and identify how it can operate in a more effective way given the resources at its disposal, with results to be presented to UKSC at next meeting.

**Action Point: Peter Costigan to set up a subgroup of Standing Committee to discuss new TOR, what BRAG's role should be, where resource is best deployed, and how better to measure its influence. Results to be presented to UKSC at next meeting.**

**7 Feedback on COP 8, Brazil**

- 7.1 Paul Rose gave a brief verbal presentation on COP8.
- 7.2 Many of the discussions at COP 8 centred on relations between the developing and developed world vis a vis the leverage of funding related to biodiversity conservation.
- 7.3 Pleased to report that we didn't lose ground on any conservation areas. CBD are moving into an implementation phase which will hopefully streamline processes and result in agreed procedures for scientific assessment. A resolution was passed to review implementation of the CBD through National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and the guidance for the reviews this would be circulated to Standing Committee.

**Action Point: Paul Rose to circulate CBD guidance for reviewing NBSAPs to Standing Committee.**

**8 Any other urgent business**

No urgent business to report

**9 Dates of future meetings**

11.00am to 2.30pm, Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2006 in Conference Room 4, Temple Quay House, Bristol

**10 Any Other Urgent Business**

Mark Avery, on behalf of the Standing Committee thanked Brian for his hard work and wished him luck with his new role as Sustainable Food Chain Director with the Sustainable Food and Farming Directorate.

## **Where next for the review of priority species?**

1. There has been much debate over the form the review of priority species should take, following identification of the "stage 1 list". The following emerged from the discussion at the UKBAP Standing Committee on 5 April 2006.

### **The name**

2. It was agreed that the stage 1 list should be known as the draft UK BAP list of species and habitats. The word "draft" should be dropped on publication, which is provisionally scheduled for November 2006.

### **Categorisation**

3. There was concern at the prospect of publishing the stage 1 list without some form of commentary as to what this implies. At the least, there should be some indication of the kind of action which each species requires. Borrowing from language used in respect of bird species, it was agreed that species on the list need to be classified according to whether their predominant need is for:
  - Research/monitoring
  - Trial management
  - Recovery management, or
  - Sustainable management.Or some similar categorisation

### **Signposting**

4. Within these categories, particularly the latter two, it is helpful to specify various aspects of the actions needed. As implementation of the UKBAP is now a devolved matter, the first of these is whether it is necessary for action planning to be undertaken at a UK level, or whether what is needed can be done on a country by country basis. This will include advice as to whether the species are a priority in all or just some of the countries within the UK.
5. Where recovery management is needed in particular, there are further categories of action which may achieve or contribute to recovery. These include:
  - a. actions to be taken outside the scope of the UK BAP, eg climate change, diffuse water pollution or CAP reform;
  - b. actions at the ecosystem or habitat level which will assist listed species;
  - c. actions which will benefit a group of listed species; and
  - d. single species actions.

The review should identify the breadth of action planning to which each species will best respond.

### **Targets**

6. Discussion of the use of targets in delivering improved conservation status has reflected several strands of thought. First, it is acknowledged that population targets have played an important role in delivery of the UK BAP to date, and this

should not be denied to species which are now identified as being of conservation concern. Second, targets should be more SMART, in that they should be seriously pursued and therefore achievable. Third is that SMART targets depend on a level of knowledge about populations, population trends, conservation actions and the response of populations to actions – these are not always available. Fourth is that to spread the available resources and sense of priority across a list of over a thousand species is unlikely to maximise cost-effectiveness of delivery and achieve the relevant targets. Fifth is that population monitoring is expensive, and where the existence of targets diverts scarce financial and human resources away from conservation action towards monitoring, this may be counterproductive. It is clear that the term “target” has been used in different contexts to mean different things, and that that no single set of targets can fulfil all of the functions which are required of them.

7. The way forward which emerged from the Standing Committee meeting is for a twin track. All species included on the draft list are there because their conservation status is of some concern, and it is likely that they will stay there until that concern is allayed. There should therefore be “success criteria” to reflect the point at which a species can be removed from the list. This will normally be expressed in terms of its population, although not necessarily in strict numerical terms.
8. SMART targets, on the other hand, need to be expressed in terms of the actions which are designed to achieve them. They should therefore be derived as part of the action planning process, and will emerge at whatever level that action planning takes place, as indicated in the signposting exercise. To the degree that the planning has objectives which are wider than the species which are of concern, it may not include population levels of these species among its targets, although they are not precluded as indicators (as with farmland bird populations which are used as an indicator for efforts to promote sustainable farming). It would be entirely appropriate for habitat action plans to include population targets for priority species which depend on them.

### **Immediate next steps**

9. It is proposed to take this paper to the next meeting of the Priority Species and Habitats Review Group, scheduled for 23 May, and to discuss within the group the way forward. The categorising, signposting, criterion setting, action planning and target setting processes referred to here clearly constitute a long term effort, and cannot be achieved in advance of a November 2006 publication date. However, the Standing Committee did not want to publish the stage 1 list without at least some differentiation between the different kinds of action needed. Subject to the views of the Group, it is proposed that an attempt be made to categorise species according to their predominant needs, and on the basis of whether action should be planned at the UK or the country level, in time for a publication date before the end of 2006.