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**UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee**  
**8<sup>th</sup> November 2007**  
**Minutes**

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**Present**

John Robbs	DEFRA (Chair)	Peter Costigan	LLSSD, DEFRA
Martin Brasher	WHB, DEFRA	Charles Stewart-Roper	SG
Michael Dunn	WAG	John Everitt	WCL
Ian Hooper	SG	David Parker	CCW
Malcolm Vincent	JNCC	Andy Stott	LLSSD, DEFRA
Roger Ward	WHB, DEFRA	Sarah Webster	WHB, DEFRA
Julian Hughes	RSPB	Paula Hendy	DEFRA (Minutes)
Paul Rose	JNCC	Tom O'Hanlon	DEFRA (Minutes)
Ron MacDonald	SNH	Pete Brotherton	NE

**Apologies**

Mark Avery	RSPB	Julian Hughes Attending
Deryck Steer	JNCC	Malcolm Vincent Attending
Andrew Wood	NE	Pete Brotherton Attending
David Henshilwood	NE	
Bob Brown	NIBG	
Mike Meharg	DOENI	
Graham Seymour	DOENI	
Ken Bradley	DOENI	
Ant Maddock	JNCC	
Richard Weyl	DOENI	
Steve Lee-Bapty	WHB, DEFRA	
Eric Blencowe	WHB, DEFRA	

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**1 Welcome**

1.1 The chairman welcomed all present.

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

Action Points arising from UKSC meeting 25<sup>th</sup> April 2007

**2.1** *Action Point 3.8: Climate Change Impacts on UK BAP Targets. Mark Stevenson to reword 'observatory' recommendation*

Mark Stevenson had reworded the recommendation to read 'To establish a co-ordinated network for collating, analysing and reporting on observed biological impacts of climate change'.

**2.2** *Action Point 3.9: Climate Change Impacts on UK BAP Targets. Mark Stevenson to have further discussions with the devolved administrations to discuss what work is involved.*

The specification had now been drafted with helpful comments from JNCC and the devolved administrations. Project now transferred to Helen Pontier to take forward.

- 2.3** *Action Point 4.9: Strategic Statement on UK Biodiversity and feedback from 1<sup>st</sup> March workshop. Contributions/comments needed from devolved administrations by 9<sup>th</sup> May (Section 4).*  
Sarah Webster recorded her thanks to Julian Hughes for his help with *Conserving Biodiversity – the UK approach*, which was launched in October at the UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference .
- 2.4** *Action Point 5.12: Priority Species and Habitats Review. BRIG to draft timetable and forward to Secretariat as soon as possible.*  
Covered at Agenda item 3.
- 2.5** *Action Point 6.3: The UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference – Progress report*  
*Any further suggestions for presenters, workshop hosts, etc should be sent to the Secretariat by COP Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May.*  
Sarah Webster said no suggestions were received, but the conference had been successful and had attracted 120 participants.
- 2.6** *Action Point from 25<sup>th</sup> April meeting: 4.34 Report from BRIG – Information Gap sub –group: JNCC to bring forward prioritised and costed proposals for closing the information gap, to the next meeting of UKSC.*  
Malcolm Vincent suggested the proposal was circulated around BRIG for consideration at its January meeting, to be considered substantively at the next UKSC meeting.
- 2.7** The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

### **3 Action planning process following the publication of new UK list of priority species and habitats UKSC 07-17**

- 3.1** John Robbs introduced paper UKSC 07-17 that had been developed by BRIG as a forward process for completing the work on the signposting exercises and assigning responsibilities for implementing action. There were a number of challenges to meet, including a new, and much longer, priority list; the need to embed the ecosystem approach; and a degree of frustration with the process on a number of sides. The paper provided good groundwork. He suggested the Committee addressed the issues in the paper, but reminded all not to lose sight of the goal of making a difference on the ground. A consensus was sought from the Standing Committee on the approach set out in the paper as the basis for further refinement by BRIG, with a view to final ‘sign-off’ early in 2008. John invited preliminary comments before going through the detail of the paper.
- 3.2** Malcolm Vincent commented that there was still some unfinished business on the paper, although he felt that overall it was positive. He also brought to the committee’s attention the recommendations from Wildlife Link and Scottish Environment Link for individual species targets. These would be examined in a pilot he was planning to run over the winter.

- 3.3 Ian Hooper felt the paper needed to define more clearly what would be required at the UK level. John Robbs recognised this paper had been a difficult task for JNCC and was intended to suggest a way forward as a framework that recognized the fact of devolution while providing for the necessary coordination at UK level.
- 3.4 Ron Macdonald expressed concern with some of the more prescriptive parts of the paper, while David Parker stressed the importance of the UK BAP as a partnership, that the current relationship with NGOs needed to be maintained, and that care should be taken to ensure that the links already present in the partnership were not lost.
- 3.5 John Robbs said that not all the links would necessarily be kept as they were, but acknowledged the importance of the partnership. John Everitt emphasized that the NGOs were not just species-focused and were endorsing the ecosystem approach, but rather were looking at how species fitted in to such an approach.
- 3.6 John then recommended dealing with the paper in a series of 8 steps:

#### **3.6.1 Step 1: Brigading Habitats into Groups (UK SC 07-17 paras 2.4-2.6)**

It was agreed that habitats would be brigaded into groupings and it was recommended that Habitat “Umbrella” Groups be established at country level. These Groups would have responsibility for setting objectives/targets for their priority habitats and also for reporting at the country level. The “Umbrella” Groups would be charged with meeting the relevant needs of all species characteristic of their priority habitats (both animals and plants) including those priority species characteristic of particular habitats within their habitat grouping. These groups might include species representatives if considered appropriate by the countries. The groups, or their representatives, would meet at the UK level where necessary to ensure a consistent approach in the selection of objectives/targets (to enable UK reporting), to aggregate country reports on priority habitats into UK reports, and to share experience and knowledge .

It was agreed that each country would consider what grouping would make sense for its own needs, by **8 January 2008**. This would generate four sets of groupings, following which it would be necessary to analyse how far there was a match.

**ACTION: Each country to consider the groupings of habitats on the new UK list of priority species and habitats which made most sense, by 8 January. Subsequently, JNCC to advise on the match between the groupings.**

#### **3.6.2 Step 2: BRIG confirmation of species requiring specific management, following signposting exercise (UK SC 07-17 para 2.8)**

Some priority species (currently 403 taxa) will need specific management action. The signposting consultation process will assist in finalising those species which may require specific management objectives and targets to be set. However, BRIG will want to confirm selection of those species.

**ACTION: BRIG to confirm which species require specific management action, following the results of the signposting consultation.**

**3.6.3 Step 3: Role of Lead Partners in identifying and reporting on priority species requiring management beyond Habitat Action Plans. (UK SC 07-17 para 2.9)**

A number of key principles were agreed:

- (1) No one party should set targets
- (2) The relevant delivery body needs to sign up to particular targets set
- (3) Lead delivery bodies may find it helpful to identify a lead partner to facilitate this process.

To meet these principles, it was recommended that each country would appoint a lead delivery body. (For example, in England, the lead delivery body would be Natural England, but other countries might wish to make their own arrangements). The lead delivery body in each country would be responsible for organising the conservation of the priority species occurring in their country. This was likely to include prioritising species for action, and identifying a lead partner to help work up targets and plan for delivery. Where a species occurred in 2, 3 or all countries of the UK, the lead delivery bodies would identify between them whether they wanted a joint lead partner, and if so, who the lead partner should be. These bodies would then work together to develop targets and plans that the four countries could jointly buy into.

**ACTION: Following completion of the signposting exercise, each country to identify a lead body to be responsible for organising the conservation of the priority species occurring in their country. Countries to consider working together where species occur in more than one country.**

**3.6.4 Step 4: Wider Actions (UK SC 07-17 para 2.9)**

Because the actions go beyond what the country agencies can deliver, the wider actions would need to be owned by the country biodiversity groups, as these involved a wider range of players. How exactly the wider actions were discharged would be a matter for the country groups themselves. Actions would cover habitats as well as species.

**ACTION: Following completion of the signposting exercise, country biodiversity groups to consider how to deliver the wider actions identified as necessary for priority habitats and species.**

**3.6.5 Step 5: Transitional arrangements (UK SC 07-17 para 3.21)**

It was agreed that the old list of priority habitats and species, together with the species Lead Partners and existing arrangements for habitats, would be maintained while the arrangements for the new approach were finalised and fully established, and all the preparations completed. This would also facilitate reporting on the old list, which is scheduled for completion in 2008, with publication in 2009.

### **3.6.6 Step 6: Success criteria (UK SC para 3.23 - 3.24)**

Success criteria are the measures by which a species or habitat is identified as being suitably recovered to enable its removal from the UK list of Priority Habitats and Species. Achievement of the specified targets would normally be the criterion for success for species with individual plans. It was agreed that other success criteria would be most useful for species without individual plans. The criterion of what would need to be achieved to remove the species from the priority list would be a default for species without specific plans. It was agreed that BRIG should establish and manage a system for establishing success criteria for the individual habitats and species. It was expected that the expert groups would need to provide the essential information. It was important that the application of principles to formulate individual success criteria was rigorously quality-assured to avoid inconsistencies.

**ACTION: BRIG to establish and manage a system for establishing success criteria for the individual habitats and species.**

### **3.6.7 Step 7: Surveillance and monitoring (UKSC 07-17 paras 3.1 and 3.2)**

The surveillance framework was nearly ready; BRIG would come back to Standing Committee for sign-off.

**ACTION: JNCC to circulate surveillance and monitoring paper around BRIG for consideration at its January meeting, and subsequently to Standing Committee for consideration at its meeting in April 2008.**

### **3.6.8 Step 8: Research (UKSC 07-17 para 3.3)**

BRAG would not be dealing with the individual research needs for HAPs and SAPs, but rather with cross-cutting issues. BRIG was invited to prepare a short note on what a general framework for biodiversity research to underpin the conservation of priority habitats and species would look like.

**ACTION: BRIG to prepare a short note on a general framework for biodiversity research to underpin the conservation of priority habitats and species.**

## **UK reporting on 2010 target**

### **4 BIYP 2009 Update**

- 4.1 Sarah Webster informed the committee of plans to update the online indicators for *Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket* as and when the data became available during 2008, with an updated hard copy version of the publication planned for 2009.

## **5 Fourth National Report to CBD (and EU BAP)**

- 5.1 Andy Stott gave a presentation to the Standing Committee detailing the UK's commitment to reporting at Global and EU levels.
- 5.2 The Fourth National Report to the Convention of Biological Diversity was due to be submitted in March 2009. This would then contribute to the third Global Biodiversity Outlook which would effectively report on global performance against the 2010 target. Each National Report would be composed of four main chapters, with the UK having agreed to provide a sample of the fourth, "Conclusions: Progress Towards the 2010 Target and Implementation of the Strategic Plan". Chapter 4 would have three sections: 'Section A. Progress towards the 2010 Target'; 'Section B. Progress towards the Goals and Objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Convention'; and 'Section C. Conclusions'. The presentation detailed the proposed structure of these.
- 5.3 The second half of the presentation covered EU BAP Reporting. It included the commitment under the EC Biodiversity Communication to report on 'mid-term' (2008) progress towards the 2010 target to Council and Parliament and to give a full evaluation in 2011 of the extent to which EU had met its 2010 targets. The objectives of the report would be to assess overall progress towards 2010 target at EU and MS levels, and the delivery of actions and targets in EU BAP. It should also identify gaps in delivery at an early stage and adjust the actions to meet the targets. The presentation also showed how the different reporting systems and requirements (at UK, EU and CBD levels) would feed into each other.
- 5.4 The committee was asked to indicate whether they were happy with the actions proposed for UK reporting.
- 5.5 John Robbs felt there were 3 issues that needed consideration: the EU reporting process; the draft of Chapter IV of the UK National report; and BARS.
- 5.6 EU reporting process:

John asked whether the EU could impose a reporting requirement, and what was the process for determining what the reporting sequence should be? There would be a discussion of the reporting timetable at the next Nature Directors' meeting in Lisbon at the end of November.

John asked that a letter be drafted for him to send to Ladislav Miko (Director, Protecting the Natural Environment Directorate, at the European Commission), prior to the Nature Directors' meeting, raising concerns about the lack of advance notice, the need for alignment with the reporting obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the desirability of building on other existing EU reporting obligations, such as under the Directives.

- 5.7 John was concerned that due to the proposed reporting timetable, the EU's report would contain old data, since it would be based on what member states had provided in 2008 and would not feature the material that had been provided for the CBD in 2009. Andy Stott explained that whilst the UK was committed to providing the level of reporting embedded in the EU Communication, we had a

degree of flexibility in relation to the amount of information we provided. We currently volunteer information to the EU as there is no legal requirement.

- 5.8 The Committee discussed the requirements and John concluded that our priority should be reporting to the CBD.

**ACTION POINT: Andy Stott to draft a letter to Ladislav Miko before the Nature Directors meeting in Lisbon raising these concerns.**

- 5.9 The UK's contribution for Chapter IV of the Fourth National Report:

John asked that the committee provide comments regarding the proposed structure directly to Andy Stott.

**ACTION POINT: Committee members to provide comments on the structure of Chapter IV and how it should be populated to Andy Stott by 22<sup>nd</sup> November.**

- 5.10 The Committee was informed that the reports from parties to the CBD were required by March 2009, and the UK's sample chapter would need to be provided to the CBD secretariat in December. John stressed the to give careful attention be given to the information the sample chapter contained. This would need to be cleared with Ministers, who would take a keen interest.

- 5.11 John asked that Martin Brasher liaise with Andy and JNCC about the content of the chapter. Andy Stott recommended that the content should be based on the indicators as much as possible.

- 5.12 Pete Brotherton was keen to emphasise that the document was intended to be a model and so we shouldn't be held back by our shortcomings. It was an opportunity to set the standard.

**ACTION POINT: Martin Brasher to work with JNCC and Andy Stott on the content of the boxes, and clearance by Ministers.**

5. Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS):

John Robbs underlined the need to ensure that BARS was well populated. Pete Brotherton informed the Committee that, in England, the BARS module that had been developed to capture progress on the England Biodiversity Strategy incorporated a facility to link this progress to the relevant actions under the EU Biodiversity Action Plan. Training arranged for EBS workstream leads would cover this. In principle, this could be extended to the other countries of the UK, who were already using BARS to record progress, but without an explicit link to EU Actions. If all UK countries used this system, it would be suitable (along with Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket) for feeding into the EU and CBD reporting cycles.

## **6 UK Reporting in 2010**

- 6.1 Sarah Webster said there was likely to be domestic interest in what had been achieved by 2010, including attention from the media. Of the current 19 UK indicators, 12 would be updated in time for 2010, 3 would not and 4 could be if funding were put into place for development.

Sarah recommended the web-based versions of the indicators be updated in 2010, and asked if the Committee required something more substantial i.e. hard copy publication?

- 6.2 The Committee discussed the proposal and agreed that the 2010 updates should be made available online but a hard copy publication was not required as an updated version of BIYP was planned for 2009.

## **Communications**

### **7 Biodiversity Partnership Conference: UKSC 07-22**

- 7.1 John asked the Committee whether they thought another Biodiversity Partnership conference should be held, and if the effort put into organizing such an event was proportionate to the gains. He also asked if a host had yet been decided.
- 7.2 Following a brief discussion, the group decided that the purpose and objectives of the conference needed to be better defined. Ian Hooper suggested that the conference should have either a technical, inward focus or be outward-looking toward other stakeholders. Some members commented that the UK dimension of the conference was a bit sparse, with many of the organizations represented at a comparatively junior level.
- 7.3 Pete Brotherton suggested that with all the changes in the UK process and need for clarity as to what functions were appropriate to the UK level, the conference could assist with identifying this.
- 7.4 Sarah mentioned that the England Biodiversity Group had discussed how best to engage other sectors and had concluded that this was best done at the country level and by getting a “slot” at events organized by the sector concerned, rather than setting up a biodiversity event and expecting business or local Government to attend. This had proved successful –eg when EBG presented to the Local Government Association conference.
- 7.5 Mike Dunn said Welsh colleagues had no appetite for organizing two conferences – one at national and one at UK level - if the 2008 conference was to be held in Wales. However, there was the possibility of combining the Welsh Biodiversity Partnership conference with the UK conference, with plans already underway for the Welsh event to be held in Aberystwyth in September 2008.

**ACTION POINT: Committee Members were asked to submit suggestions or comments with regards to the future of the UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference to the Secretariat by the end of November.**

## **8 House Style of Biodiversity Partnership Communications: UKSC 07-19**

- 8.1 The paper set out current and possible options for the style of Biodiversity Partnership communications and publications, and recommended a 4-slice design as used for *Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket 2007* and *Conserving Biodiversity – the UK approach*.
- 8.2 The Committee agreed.
- 8.3 The secretariat requested that Committee members assist by providing high resolution images for future publications.

## **9 Any Other Business**

- 9.1 Peter Costigan drew the Committee's attention to BRAG's recent publication "Research Needs for UK Biodiversity". The document identified important knowledge gaps associated with a number of cross-cutting biodiversity research themes.
- 9.2 The BRIG workplan for 2007-2010 was briefly discussed, in particular the communication element. Concerns were raised as to whether the existing BRIG membership included sufficient expertise in the subject to deal with the external communications that were to be developed. Sarah Webster emphasised that the communications strategy was intended to cover BRIG's business across the partnership as opposed to a communications strategy for biodiversity more generally.

**ACTION POINT: BRIG to co-opt someone with appropriate communications expertise or skills.**

- 9.3 The Committee was told that Scottish Environment Link (SEL) had expressed an interest in becoming a member of BRIG. John Everitt said LINK did have discussions with SEL prior to the UKSC meetings. John Robbs asked that WCL consider its connections to the country LINK networks and through BRIG.

**ACTION POINT: Wildlife and Countryside Link to discuss representation of Scottish interests at Standing Committee with Scottish Environment Link.**

**The next meeting of the UK Standing Committee will be on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April.**