

UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee

22 March 2004

Present: Brian Harding	Defra (chair)	Martin Capstick	Defra
Keith Duff	EN	Mark Avery	RSPB
Martin Harper	RSPB	June Milligan	WAG
Jane Dalgleish	SE	David Parker	CCW
Bob Brown	NIBG	John Faulkner	DOENI
Steve Atkins	JNCC	Andy Stott	Defra
Charlotte Johnston	JNCC	Jean-Luc Solandt	MCS
Deryck Steer	JNCC	John Robbins	Defra
Moira Anderson	Defra		

Apologies: Sarah Webster	Defra	Miles Parker	Defra
Jeff Watson	SNH		

1. Introductions

1.1 The chairman welcomed Bob Brown, the newly appointed chair of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group, to the group.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. Under action 2.1 Deryck Steer reported that he had agreed with John Custance to develop and maintain links between the Indicators Forum and BRIG. Under action 5.2, work was in progress to identify headline issues to be addressed by the 2005 report. Other items had been completed or would be dealt with under other items on the agenda.

3. Report from BRIG (paper UKBSC 04/01)

2.1 Deryck Steer reported that three sub-groups had been established and milestones set to take forward objectives for species and habitats review, targets review and 2005 reporting round. Reports from these groups were included in the paper. The final paragraph under the targets review sub-group on standing committee agreement for guidance notes had been withdrawn (a revised version is circulated with these minutes).

3.2 The work of the BRIG sub groups was recognised and welcomed.

4. Route Map to 2005 (paper UKBSC 04/02)

4.1 The initiative for this paper had come from Wildlife and Countryside Link. It addressed the need to act in a co-ordinated way to achieve the review and reporting goals for 2005 and 2010 and set a broad framework for debate. Paper UKBSC 04/01 had set out activity that was underway, while this paper highlighted the overarching issues.

4.2 It was noted that some of the actions identified in the paper were already in train through BRIG. The 2005 reporting round was a key starting point for

information collection and analysis but timing was important so that people's resources and goodwill were not overstretched with requests for information. A better understanding what motivates people to do reporting would be helpful. Mark Avery suggested that finding out about the status of HAPs and SAPs was an important factor but volunteers need to know that their data is contributing to this picture and that it will be followed up with an indication of what action will be taken as a result. It was also noted that some groups have a supportive culture that encourages reporting.

4.3 Brian Harding noted that the sequence for forthcoming reporting and reviews should be clearer following development of a timeline for the process milestones. This would need to be clear in time for the Partnership Conference in June.

4.4 More information on the realistic timescale for the review of species and habitat action plans would need to be available in time for the conference in June.

4.5 It was recognised that individual action plans achieve effective action but that different approaches, such as the Ecosystem Approach or a grouped plan, may sometimes be more appropriate. It was agreed that a more systematic approach to decision making was needed. Criteria that can be applied to individual species should be developed. Advice from BRIG and others should be sought. It was also necessary to decide where the decision making process should sit as consensus might be difficult to achieve without clear lines of responsibility.

4.6 It was agreed that the reporting rounds and subsequent target revision should be tailored as far as possible to contribute to assessing the rate of biodiversity loss as required by the CBD target for 2010 and to other European and global-level assessments.

Action: BRIG to develop clear criteria, timetables and process information for the review, prior to the UK Partnership conference.

4.7 On frequency of reporting, Jane Dalglish reported that Scotland had undertaken to report every 3 years. The opportunities for continuous updating of reports through BARS would be helpful in and UK reporting in 2008 would help identify any outstanding issues that required attention in time for 2011 reporting. It was agreed that the 3 year cycle should be maintained and there would be a further reporting round in 2008 as well as 2011.

Action: Three year reporting cycle to be maintained.

4.8 On procedures for future targets reviews beyond 2010, the committee agreed in principle that that reviews should be undertaken en bloc rather than ad hoc.

4.9 On future reviews of the lists of priority species and habitats the committee agreed in principle that they should be reviewed en bloc. However,

emergency action should not be ruled out. If, for example, new information identified immediate risk to a species a mechanism was needed to take action more quickly. It was also recognised that BAP listing allows action to be taken under agri-environment schemes and in planning considerations. Proposals for a mechanism to consider emergency action should be prepared by BRIG

Action: BRIG to draw up proposals for emergency review procedure.

4.10 On the issue of favourable conservation status it was noted that no method of reporting on this was available. Any reporting protocol should co-ordinate with EU requirements as part of Natura 2000 reporting on FCS. Deryck Steer reported that JNCC were looking at a definition of FCS and whether existing datasets and BAP reporting fit in with it. David Parker said that FCS for sites, habitats and species needs to be defined as a fundamental building block to the decision making process. Martin Capstick noted that discussion around FCS was ongoing as part of the Natura 2000 and Ramsar groups and that the Standing Committee might not want to duplicate these discussions. It was agreed that this topic should be considered again at the next meeting.

Action: FCS to be on agenda of next meeting

5. UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference

5.1 The conference would be held in Cardiff on 21/22 June. Proposals for the programme were noted. Additional suggestions for this or future events included involving industry and biodiversity conservation in the marine environment. The events should be as interactive as possible.

6. Report from BRAG (UKBSC 04/04)

6.1 Andy Stott reported that BRAG had not met as a whole since the last committee meeting but that sub-groups, for example on socio-economic issues, had been taking programmes forward. Following discussion with the British Ecological Society, non-native species was to be included as a theme in the BES annual meeting later this year.

June Milligan questioned whether mechanisms had been established to integrate socio-economic issues into other workstreams. It was agreed that a further report on the work of the socio-economic group would be made following the BRAG meeting in June.

Action: BRAG to include integration of socio-economic issues in report at the next meeting of the Standing Committee.

7. Protecting biodiversity in the marine environment

Steve Atkins reported that the 5 year Review of Marine Nature Conservation was coming to an end. The pilot project in the Irish Sea recommended by the RMNC would publish its final report in the summer. The project had looked at marine processes at different scales from the regional sea level to individual habitats and species and would make recommendations at each level.

Classification of seabed landscape types had provided a map that would be useful for regulating and managing human use. Criteria had been set for recognising nationally important features and a total of 26 habitats and 170 species (out of 8000 species in UK waters) had been identified as of national importance.

The study would conclude that conservation goals can only be achieved through a network of protected marine areas. Action at the regional sea level would need to involve players beyond the UK level and EU support and an international framework should be sought. An extract from the draft report accompanies these minutes.

8. Delivery of marine BAPs (paper UKBSC 04/05)

Jean-Luc Solandt on behalf of WCL reported that nothing is known about 66% of marine habitats and 47% of marine species. Collection of data in the marine environment is more difficult and more expensive than on land. The difficulties in delivering marine BAPs were recognised and delivery mechanisms other than BAP process needed to be considered. The development of indicators of a broader healthy marine ecosystem was proposed as a useful step forward, as part of an approach that focused on managing the marine environment on a more holistic level.

It was noted that marine issues will be considered as part of the UK BAP review and that the topic should remain on the Standing Committee agenda for the next meeting, following the report of the Irish Seas project

Action: Irish Sea project report to be included on agenda for next meeting.

9. Countryside Survey

Andy Stott reported on plans for the next Countryside Survey and how it might relate to BAP reporting. He explained that the Countryside Survey is an integrated survey and assessment of natural resources based on sampling and field survey and satellite data. However, none of these methods provided detail beyond the 'broad habitat' description. A planning group has been established to prepare for the next survey and is considering the requirements for the survey, survey design, timing and consistency across the UK, and funding including partner costs.

10. Country Reports

Jane Dalglish reported for Scotland that the Nature Conservation Bill would reach third reading at end of April. The biodiversity provision had been amended at committee stage to include a report to Parliament on the strategy every three years, and to publish a list of priority species and habitats in a year. The Biodiversity Strategy would be launched on 25 May. Three implementation plans were being prepared for marine, rural and urban areas.

Martin Capstick reported for England that a workshop meeting of the England Biodiversity Group had identified key deliverables for the strategy workstreams. A very successful Exchange Fair had been held at the beginning

of March bringing together Lead Partners, LBAPs and EBS workstreams. A leaflet on incorporating biodiversity into community strategies had been published for distribution to local and regional partnerships.

John Faulkner reported for Northern Ireland that Bob Brown had been appointed as chair of the NIBG. The group planned to hold its first meeting in May. The second year of the Biodiversity Implementation Plan had been completed

David Parker reported for Wales that all the Wales LBAPs were now complete. An environmental strategy was currently being developed to accompany economic and social strategies.

11. AOB

11.1 The paper presented by WCL for consideration at a future standing committee meeting outlining proposals to improve integration of biodiversity conservation initiatives had been covered under discussion of favourable conservation status at 4.5 above

12. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 13 October 2004

Wednesday 9 March 2005