

---

**UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee**  
**29<sup>th</sup> April 2008**  
**Minutes**

---

**Present**

Martin Brasher	Defra	Peter Costigan	Defra
Eric Blencowe	Defra	Greg Mudge	SNH
John Everitt	WCL	Mark Avery	RSPB
Ian Hooper	SG	Bob Brown	NIBG
Hazel Drewett	CCW	Pete Brotherton	NE
Malcolm Vincent	JNCC	Diana Reynolds	WAG
Andy Stott	Defra	Mark Stevenson	Defra
Sarah Webster	Defra	Tom O'Hanlon	Defra (Minutes)

**Apologies**

John Robbs (chair)	Defra	Martin Brasher chaired in John's absence on sick leave
Andrew Wood	NE	Pete Brotherton representing
Mike Meharg	DOENI	
Ken Bradley	DOENI	
David Parker	CCW	Hazel Drewett representing
Charles Stewart Roper	SG	
Paul Rose	JNCC	
Ron MacDonald	SNH	Greg Mudge representing
Richard Weyl	DOENI	
Roger Ward	Defra	
Ant Maddock	JNCC	
Deryck Steer	JNCC	
Graham Seymour	DOENI	

---

**1 Welcome**

1.1 In his role as acting chairman, Martin Brasher passed on John Robbs' apologies and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising – UKSC 08-01**

Outstanding action points arising from UKSC meeting 8<sup>th</sup> November 2007

**2.1 Action Point 9.2:** Concerns were raised as to whether the existing BRIG membership included sufficient expertise in the communications field. **ACTION:** BRIG to co-opt someone with appropriate communications expertise or skills. *This is still ongoing.*

- 2.2 Action Point 9.3:** ACTION: Wildlife and Countryside Link to discuss representation of Scottish interests at Standing Committee with Scottish Environment Link. *John Everitt reported that Scottish Environment Link would like to be involved but Wildlife and Countryside Link were happy to continue to represent their devolved partners on an informal basis. Martin Brasher asked Wildlife and Countryside Link to continue representing their devolved colleagues informally as currently.*
- 2.3 The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.
- 3 Progress with Action Planning for UK list of priority species and habitats (BRIG report) – UKSC 08-02a/b/c/d**
- 3.1 Malcolm Vincent introduced the BRIG report (08-02a). Hazel Drewett informed the group that the marine habitat definitions were still under discussion.
- 3.2 ACTION: Hazel Drewett to circulate marine habitat definitions to Standing Committee when they were agreed.**

### **UK Habitat Groups: Terms of Reference and Working Procedures**

- 3.3 Malcolm then discussed Annex 1 (08-02b), which dealt with the terms of reference and working procedures for the UK Habitat groups. The committee was asked to endorse the paper.
- 3.4 Ian Hooper felt it was important to emphasise that the role of the UK Habitat groups was to assist in the sharing and communicating of information and reporting at the UK level, whilst delivery of action remained with the country groups. Ian felt it important to stress that their role was advisory rather than instructive. Greg Mudge felt that the country groups needed to be well-established before we initiated the UK groups. Mark Avery felt that the discussion on merging the objectives/targets developed at country level to form UK objectives needed to be more 2-way, with a view to ensuring they made a sensible UK whole since the UK Government had to report on meeting its biodiversity targets. Martin Brasher confirmed that while this was true the responsibility for delivery rested with each administration.
- 3.5 Pete Brotherton found a conceptual difficulty with identifying where the UK groups added value. John Everitt said that they needed to be light-touch, with the emphasis on finding a sensible way of aggregating targets, sharing best practice and advice, and reporting. The groups were not about being prescriptive on detail but about sharing best practice.
- 3.6 Malcolm Vincent explained the purpose of groups was, firstly, to ensure that reporting could be aligned so that reporting was possible at the UK level and secondly, to help countries with limited resources. They should meet only as often as was needed to do the job. As regards initiation, the UK groups should be set up once the country groups were established.
- 3.7 It was also felt important to reassure members of current groups that existing productive groups would not be dismantled, and that the new UK habitat groups would have a different purpose from the HAP steering groups. Where groups

## DRAFT

found it beneficial to meet at UK level, there was nothing to prevent them from continuing.

3.8 Martin Brasher summed up that it was important not to unpick the work already done, but that it was important for the UK groups to be light-touch and not prescriptive.

**3.9 ACTION: Any comments on redrafting to be sent to Malcolm Vincent by 17 June.**

**3.10 ACTION: Malcolm to produce a definitive version of the UK Habitat Groups' Terms of Reference paper, reflecting the Standing Committee's emphasis on light-touch groups focussed on sharing information.**

### **Species Actions: results of the signposting exercise and process for delivery of species actions**

3.11 Malcolm then introduced Annex 2 (08-02c). This paper was concerned with the follow-up to the signposting exercise. Malcolm set out the results of the paper and the caveats identified. Standing Committee was asked to endorse the conclusions relating to species actions and to determine whether the responsibility for collating information on generic advice on habitat management for species should be undertaken at the UK or country level (section 4.2).

3.12 Hazel Drewett felt that it was good for generic habitat actions to be done at the UK level, for consistency, but questioned (a) whether the species groups would be happy with this and (b) where the advice on non-generic habitat issues would come from. Ian Hooper stressed that determining and prioritising the actions had to be carried out at a sensible territorial level and was for countries to decide. This was a valuable informative process, but it was in danger of becoming instructional, for example, where countries were being asked to sign up to an "implementation plan" ; the concluding remarks were too determinative.

3.13 Mark Avery highlighted the sensitivities regarding the vast contribution that the many experts had made to the process, often unpaid, and felt it would be unreasonable for them to have similar discussions with the four administrations separately.

3.14 Greg Mudge also felt that as the actions had not been quality assured by JNCC they needed to be regarded as advice, although Malcolm Vincent pointed out it was unrealistic to quality assure over three thousand actions without replicating the signposting process. It should therefore be more a question of asking for clarification.

3.15 Pete Brotherton said it was now important for countries to get on with implementation. A mechanism was needed to allow the signposting to be updated; the action categories were not written in stone. There were gaps, but we needed to move quickly to making the signposting results publicly available, to give people a steer for conservation action. He also felt it was up to the countries to communicate to avoid each making the same demands on experts.

## DRAFT

- 3.16 Martin Brasher summarised the consensus: that there was a need to get on with delivery, make the best use of expertise, avoiding making unreasonable demands of the experts, and ensure that processes were informative not instructional.
- 3.17 ACTION: BRIG to pass the signposting information on to countries, and publish it on the UK BAP web-site or BARS as appropriate.**
- 3.18 The committee agreed that the work outlined in section 4.2 of the paper would be carried out at the UK level where possible, at least for generic advice on habitat management for species.
- 3.19 ACTION: BRIG to organise the collation of information on generic advice on habitat management for species at UK level for all habitat groups.**

### Success criteria

- 3.20 The committee then discussed Annex 3 (08-02d). This annex was concerned with the success criteria for species without current targets. The rationale was to suggest that the success criteria would be linked to the species' selection criteria, taking into account species' natural dynamics to avoid species yo-yoing across the selection threshold. Malcolm drew the committee's attention to the caveats outlined in the cover note, and also raised the question of the necessity of developing the success criteria now.
- 3.21 It was felt that the success criteria could be postponed until they were needed, as there were more important things to be done.
- 3.22 Mark Avery acknowledged that targets across a range of areas had got a bit of a bad name, and that the biodiversity community had made something of an industry out of them, which was unfortunate, but he felt there was a need to monitor how well the conservation action was doing, and without targets it was difficult to define where we wanted UK conservation to be. There was a need for a measure of where the UK's and constituent countries' biodiversity needed to be aiming for.
- 3.23 Pete Brotherton said that targets helped to divide work into tangible chunks, and the actions that were being agreed needed targets. But the lead for this was at country level. Therefore, what was needed was the potential to aggregate targets from the four countries to see how successfully the UK BAP was being implemented, and success criteria should be established around work that would be carried out at country level.
- 3.24 Bob Brown flagged the importance of avoiding confusion between targets and success, as meeting targets did not predetermine success, and John Everitt reminded the group that the purpose of the targets was to inform those carrying out action. Andy Stott said the group needed to know what success criteria would follow 2010. Malcolm confirmed that there would be targets for habitats, and for species with specific actions.
- 3.25 Martin Brasher summed up that there was a desire to get on with action and a need to avoid creating a lot of extra work, but general agreement that we needed to know what success looked like.

## DRAFT

3.26 Malcolm Vincent agreed to take the paper away and consider what success looks like and propose some sort of monitoring and reporting process to capture this.

**3.26 ACTION: Malcolm Vincent, through BRIG, to consider how success could be determined, and come back to Standing Committee with proposals, including a monitoring and reporting process to capture this.**

### **4 UK Biodiversity Indicators in your pocket – 2008 Update – Mark Stevenson - UKSC 08 – 03**

4.1 Mark presented the paper on behalf of the Biodiversity Indicators Steering Group (BISG). The paper proposed 5 alterations to the current UK indicator arrangements, which the committee was asked to endorse. Mark first gave some background on the indicators, and then discussed the proposals. These were: to include water birds in indicator 1 – trends in populations of selected species; to add a measure for wintering water birds, as was already included with the sustainable development targets, to indicator 1; to add a measure for bat populations, which would broaden the taxonomic groups covered by the indicators (to include mammals) and were a good indicator of the general condition of the landscape, to indicator 1; to remove the chemical water quality indicator, from indicator 15 – river quality, as this was already covered by the biological water quality; and to add moths to indicator 1. If these modifications were added the overall assessment would be unchanged. Mark also pointed out that wintering water birds would show a long term improvement but a short term loss, which showed an effect of climate change on biodiversity.

4.2 The committee discussed the proposal. Some queried whether the benefit of adding moths was worth the investment, but others felt that as so few insect groups were covered, and that moths covered a wide range of ecological niches, that the addition was justified. It was clarified that CBD would most likely use the indicators as case studies. Pete Brotherton also flagged the importance of a clear annotation accompanying the wintering water birds highlighting that their state was not solely indicative of the UK but of wider factors including climate change.

**4.3 ACTION: Martin Brasher to report Standing Committee's comments back to John Robbs and proceed subject to approval**

### **5 2008 reporting round (BRIG report) - UKSC 08 – 04**

5.1 Malcolm Vincent introduced the paper, for Standing Committee to note.

5.2 The Committee noted the paper with approval

**5.3 ACTION: All to note the need to input to the 2008 reporting round in a timely fashion.**

**6 Fourth National report to the Convention on Biological Diversity - UKSC 08 – 05**

- 6.1 Andy Stott informed the committee that the paper had been provided for information, as the draft sample chapter had already been submitted. He commented that other parties were forthcoming with providing data and that the report would be a priority at CBD COP9 in late May. Andy said that the aim was to submit the final report to CBD in May 2009. Eric Blencowe commented that the timing of the deadline would coincide with the next Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) meeting (likely to be in Kenya in June) which would be good for publicity.
- 6.2 Mark Avery said some NGOs might like to produce a shadow document, and also raised the question of whether overseas territories would be included. Eric Blencowe said the overseas territories would have to have signed up to CBD to be included. Pete Brotherton also enquired as to whether, if they signed up, they would provide their own report or be included in the UK's report. Martin Brasher said that Defra would look into this.
- 6.3 ACTION: Defra to look into the question of OT reporting to CBD, and report back to Standing Committee**

**7 Surveillance and Research: - UKSC 08 – 06 a & b**

***Surveillance Strategy***

- 7.1 Malcolm introduced the paper 08-06a, which set out recommendations for a terrestrial biodiversity surveillance and monitoring strategy. Standing Committee was asked to adopt the general strategy and to establish a surveillance implementation group to drive the work forward.
- 7.2 Andy Stott welcomed the paper but felt that its scope needed to be widened to include (a) distribution data (from NBN, LRCs, etc) of species and habitats (knowing where things are), and (b) process studies (knowing why things are changing), which would help make stronger links with the scientific community and other reporting mechanisms. Peter Costigan informed the committee that the Environmental Observation Forum had been established to look critically at environmental monitoring, and needed to be engaged with the work.
- 7.3 Mark Avery, however, felt that a significant degree of involvement by NERC and the scientific community may require too much time. He proposed that sections 3.2 and 3.4 (monitoring/surveying and species-specific management action) were priorities, but there was scope to involve the scientific community with section 3.3 (research).
- 7.4 Malcolm suggested inviting NERC to the implementation group, but agreed that 3.2 and 3.4 needed to be actioned. He also said that at least some biodiversity reporting schemes had been taken into account.
- 7.5 Pete Brotherton felt that (with regards to section 3.2.ii) the lack of decent habitat inventories was holding back progress, although Malcolm said the value of inventories lay more with direct conservation rather than surveillance. It was felt

## DRAFT

that the inventories should be integrated into the strategy if they would give a clearer picture of the UK's biodiversity, and if they would not then this needed to be clarified.

7.6 Sarah Webster pointed out that it was important to include distribution information if the strategy would be used to guide investment decisions.

**7.7 ACTION: JNCC to take forward the strategy subject to a revision of the paper widening the scope to make stronger links with (a) “core surveillance” – and closely related evidence needs, in particular biological recording /inventories (knowing where things are) and (b) process studies (understanding why things are changing)**

**7.8 ACTION: The terms of reference of the Surveillance Implementation Group needed to come back to Standing Committee for approval.**

### ***Report-back from BRIG/BRAG workshop – Malcolm Vincent***

7.9 Malcolm discussed the paper reporting back from the joint BRIG/BRAG workshop on the research process. The paper made four main recommendations: species research needs should be categorised into generic and species-specific research; research questions for unclear or generalised signposted research actions should be clarified by expert groups; the finalised research actions should be communicated to researchers and research groups and a process be put in place to track the uptake of research proposals, to avoid duplication of work. The committee was asked to note the work.

7.10 It was felt that there was a need to be realistic on the ability to get new research under way, and was suggested that more specific lists may be more successful in getting funding from research councils.

## **8 Post-2010 targets – Martin Brasher**

8.1 Martin Brasher explained that some key players (EU, IUCN) were beginning to give some thought to a new target to replace the '2010' target. The UK was keen to be involved in shaping a new target because although the current one had served as a rallying call and had helped raise the biodiversity profile its weakness had been its lack of specific deliverables. He referred to possible options for a new target, including a similar 2020 target, or a more specific one. Martin explained that there had been little international progress on the new target as yet, but that this was likely to gather momentum following the G8 and CBD meetings in May.

8.2 The committee then discussed possible options. Some were in favour of an extension of the 2010 target to 2020, whereas others felt a more realistic/achievable target would be appropriate. Mark Avery suggested a possible EU target of “Creating a Europe that is resilient to climate change,” which would encompass biodiversity but acknowledge that there were wider issues to be factored in. Martin Brasher agreed that this had some attraction but pointed out that there was a danger that biodiversity could be sidelined.

**9 UK Biodiversity Partnership Conference 2008 – Aberystwyth**

- 9.1 Martin Brasher informed the committee that work was in hand on the conference, with the conference steering group meeting 2 days after this Standing Committee meeting. The conference would be taking place on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September in Aberystwyth and the theme would involve incorporating biodiversity into sustainable development.
- 9.2 On the theme for the conference, John Everitt felt that it would be valuable to include how country strategies would be shaped, and Mark Avery was concerned that the theme had limited appeal to delivery people. Martin said the comment was noted but the theme had already been adopted. Diana Reynolds commented that Sean McHugh was the person to contact with queries about attracting practitioners.

**10 AOB**

- 10.1 Martin Brasher informed the group that this was Malcolm Vincent's last Standing Committee meeting, and thanked him on behalf of the group for his great contribution over the years.

**11 Date of next meeting:**

- 11.1 Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October, Temple Quay House, Bristol