

## UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group

### 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting – Regus House, Bristol

22 November 2004, 11h30 – 15h30

## FINAL MINUTES

**Present:** Paul Rose (Chair, JNCC); Ant Maddock (Minutes, JNCC); Joanna Drewitt (SE); Hilary Allison (LINK); Pete Brotherton (EN); Sarah Webster (Defra); Trish Fretten (WAG); Julian Hughes (LINK); Robin Wynde (LINK); Phil Lewis (Defra).

### 1. Welcome and apologies

John Baxter (SNH); Deryck Steer (JNCC); Jim Munford (NBNT); Liz Howe (CCW); Judith Young (SE); Brigid Primrose (SNH).

Phil Lewis (Defra) was welcomed to the group. It was noted that the Northern Ireland representative had been missing from most BRIG meetings and concern was expressed about this.

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

The minutes of the last meeting on 7 September 2004 were accepted without change.

### 3. Actions from previous BRIG meeting

All actions had been completed or were on the agenda except those mentioned below.

Old Action 5: The species and habitat review sub-group to prepare for the standing committee by the next meeting in October the aim of Stages 2 and 3, suggestions for how proposals will be assessed and ratified, give an idea of what the results may look like and a timeline

Joanna felt that this action was proposed too early in the work of the Species and Habitat Review Sub-group but the work would be taken forward by the sub-group.

**ACTION 1: THE PRIORITY SPECIES AND HABITATS REVIEW SUB-GROUP TO DEVELOP THE AIMS OF STAGES 2 AND 3 AND TO PROVIDE SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW PROPOSALS WILL BE TAKEN FORWARD, TOGETHER WITH A TIMELINE**

Old Action 9: Ant to send out the analysis of the emails sent to UK BAP website.

It was thought that not all members received this email.

**ACTION 2: ANT TO SEND OUT THE ANALYSIS OF THE EMAILS SENT TO UK BAP WEBSITE.**

Old Action 13: John to send copies of the SNH publication on Ecological Networks to Paul who will send these copies to members requesting them.

It was reported that Defra were considering developing an event on Ecological Networks as part of the UK Presidency of the G8. Paul will report back to BRIG any developments on this topic.

Old Action 14: Robin and the 2005 sub-group to do some trials of the 2005 reporting questions.

This was already part of the sub group's forthcoming agenda and would be carried out in early 2005.

**ACTION 3:** ROBIN AND THE 2005 SUB-GROUP TO DO SOME TRIALS OF THESE QUESTIONS.

Old Action 15: Ant to send the web address of bars to BRIG members after its launch.

BARS was released on Friday 19 November.

**ACTION 4:** ANT TO SEND THE WEB ADDRESS OF BARS TO BRIG MEMBERS WITH THESE MINUTES. <http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/>

#### **4. Feedback from Sub-groups and other work since last meeting**

##### 4.1 Feedback from the Standing Committee on the BRIG reports (BRIG1104\_1\_SC feedback)

###### Sign off of BRIG's work

The Standing Committee wants to receive recommendations, rather than options, as well as work updates. They also want information telling them how the work they are signing off will help progress the UK BAP. Further, Standing Committee members need more time to consult their experts and to have substantive discussions before committing themselves to the work. This means that BRIG would need to get reports to the Standing Committee earlier. For example, the next Standing Committee meeting is on 9 March, so reports from BRIG would need to be distributed to the Standing Committee at the end of January or the first week of February.

It was pointed out that countries were represented on the sub-groups and on BRIG and that it appeared unnecessary to have the countries to review BRIG's work for a third time. However, at least one country said that a country review at the Standing Committee level would be preferable.

The following was agreed:

- Standing Committee wanted more time to consult their experts before signing off BRIG's work
- Because of ongoing work and deadlines it will be difficult for BRIG to change deadlines to accommodate more time for consultation at the Standing Committee for all work
- BRIG would develop a new way of working that allowed time for substantive discussion and consultation by the Standing Committee once the current review was completed
- Until then BRIG would aim to allow time for substantive discussion by Standing Committee principally for work that needed to be signed off

###### 2005 Partnership Conference

The Partnership Conference is to be held in Bristol next year. The Standing Committee suggested the theme "What should the UK do to meet the 2010 targets?" and use this to promote "joined-up" thinking. Sarah mentioned that the Standing committee noted some calls for the conference to go out to other sectors such as planners, business *etc.* but that it was felt more important to provide support, encouragement and invigoration for those people involved in biodiversity conservation, to celebrate success and discuss ways we can improve delivery of biodiversity conservation. If we want to influence planning, business *etc.* communities, it would be better to attend their conferences rather than get the keen and already committed planners *etc.* to ours.

Note: Although not mentioned at the BRIG meeting, the first meeting of the UK Partnership Annual Conference Steering Group was on Wednesday 24 November in Bristol.

### Indicators

At the 6 July 2004 Indicators Forum, JNCC and Defra were asked to compare UK indicators with CBD and EU frameworks and develop proposals for UK co-ordination and reporting.

#### 4.2 Information Gap Sub-group (BRIG1104\_2\_Info gap)

Pete reported that the investigation of habitat information gaps looked for the existence of baseline data and monitoring programmes and was being done at a country level. It was almost complete for England; Wales had completed the baseline assessment; work was progressing in Northern Ireland and Scotland would complete their work in the next two months.

A table with red, amber and green codes against baseline data and monitoring programmes for each of the priority habitats would be produced with information on data sources and additional survey / monitoring action underway.

**ACTION 5:** PETE TO CIRCULATE THIS TO BRIG AS SOON AS IT IS COMPLETED

Ant reported the Standing Committee had approved the proposal to telephonically investigate species survey and monitoring constraints listed by Lead Partners in the 2002 reporting round. Questions to be asked of the approximately 80 Lead Partners had been drawn up but there had been insufficient time for the sub-group to phone the Lead Partners.

BRIG agreed that the telephone survey needed to be completed before Christmas. JNCC have resources to do about 30 calls but would need assistance from other members to complete the work.

**ACTION 6:** THE SUB-GROUP TO CONDUCT THE INFORMATION GAP TELEPHONE SURVEY BEFORE THE END OF 2004.

#### 4.3 2005 Reporting Sub-group (BRIG1104\_3\_2005 Reporting; BRIG1104\_4\_Guidance note)

Robin summarised the report and asked that the attached Guidance Note be approved by BRIG and asked for clarification on who will be responsible for the publication of the 2005 report.

### Guidance Note and Data Analysis

It was agreed that the Standing Committee probably would not need to see the Guidance Note before it was sent out early in the new year. The Standing Committee had requested at its last meeting a scoping paper on how the information based on the 2005 Reporting Round would be analysed. Robin stated that the group had held initial discussions on this and this would be one of the key tasks for the sub group between now and the end of January. One option considered was the production of a mock-analysis based on 2002 data.

**ACTION 7:** COMMENTS ON THE 2005 REPORTING ROUND GUIDANCE NOTE FROM BRIG MEMBERS TO BE SENT TO ROBIN BY 6 DECEMBER 2004.

**ACTION 8:** 2005 REPORTING SUB-GROUP AND BRIG TO REPORT ON THE PLANNED ANALYSIS OF THE 2005 DATA TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE IN TIME FOR THE 9 MARCH MEETING.

### Publication of the 2005 Report

The brief of the 2005 Reporting Sub-group is to gather and analyse the 2005 reporting data. JNCC has resources to do the analysis. Defra was usually responsible for publication of the final report. Some of the

countries reported that they would not be able to separately analyse the 2005 data for their own use. The following was noted:

- The 2005 report should include data relevant to helping assess progress towards meeting the 2010 target
- The 2005 report needs to be flexible and fulfil some of the needs of the country reports
- BRIG agreed that the report should not contain much text (i.e. it will not be like the Millennium Report) but should focus on information and data. However this view needs to be confirmed by the Standing Committee
- But some items (climate change, 2010 targets and international reporting obligations like the CBD) may require more explanation and therefore more text in the report

**ACTION 9:** BRIG AND THE SUB-GROUP TO SCOPE THE ANALYSES AND INFORMATION WE WILL PRODUCE FROM THE 2005 REPORTING ROUND BY 9 MARCH STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

**ACTION 10:** THE 2005 SCOPING PAPER TO BE CIRCULATED TO MEMBERS OF BRIG PRIOR TO THE NEXT BRIG MEETING ON 8 FEBRUARY 2005

#### 4.4 Species and Habitat Priorities Review Sub-group (paper tabled on the day)

Joanna summarised her paper:

- The Group is developing a draft proforma for the scientific assessment of species and habitats and accompanying guidance note, although this is not yet complete
- There is a need to send this out early in 2005, well before the field season starts, to ensure that all those who need to contribute will have the opportunity to do so
- The Buglife work had shown how the use of examples helped explain to the experts what information was needed in Stage 1. Therefore the Species and Habitat Review Sub-group is keen to use examples in the text. In addition there needs to be clarity and agreement over the links to the ongoing marine work to ensure these reviews are clearly joined up and compatible
- The goal is to send out the Guidance Note in February/March but there is a need to decide what is covered in this note – all three Stages or just Stage 1?
- There is a need to develop a means of dealing with the data and IT experts are being consulted

BRIG agreed that it was sensible to send out the Guidance Note with the details of Stage 1 and a brief description of Stages 2 and 3.

**ACTION 11:** SPECIES AND HABITAT REVIEW GUIDANCE NOTE DETAILING STAGE 1 WITH A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF STAGES 2 AND 3 TO BE SENT TO BRIG MEMBERS BY EMAIL IN EARLY FEBRUARY 2005

**ACTION 12:** ONCE THE SPECIES AND HABITAT REVIEW GUIDANCE NOTE HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BY BRIG IT SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EXPERTS

**ACTION 13:** THE SPECIES AND HABITAT REVIEW SUB-GROUP TO PREPARE A SCOPING OF STAGES 2 AND 3 FOR BRIG DISCUSSION AT THEIR NEXT MEETING ON 8 FEBRUARY 2005

#### 4.5 Targets Review Sub-group (BRIG1104\_5\_Targets)

Pete reported that the work was generally welcomed by the Lead Partners and steering groups. Although a lack of information needed for setting SMART targets, especially for baseline estimates, is a problem for

many habitats and species, groups were dealing with the gaps they had by using the proviso that they could update the target when better information was available.

Some groups were enthusiastic about the idea of developing cross plan targets but were struggling with practicalities of setting these up. Therefore there is a need for some innovative ideas and BRIG needs to think about this and perhaps link to ideas from the Climate Change group.

#### 4.6 Climate change and ecosystem approach Sub-group (BRIG1104\_6\_Climate change)

Hillary said the new Climate Change Sub-group had identified all its members and Noranne Ellis had confirmed she would represent SNH.

Hilary said she was keen to link to the work of the Targets Sub-group as suggested above and it was pointed out that BRAG were considering climate change and links between these groups would be useful.

At their next meeting the England Biodiversity Group was discussing climate change, its links to policy and nature conservation action and will produce a paper on this discussion.

#### 4.7 Sign off of sub-group work – discussion of work with Brian Harding

Dealt with under item 4.1

#### 4.8 Other BRIG work – looking forward (carried over; BRIG1104\_7\_Looking forward)

Paul summarised his paper and made the following points stating that the opinions in the paper were his and no-one had been consulted about this work:

- Progress on the indicators had been made by the formation of the JNCC / Defra partnership
- BRIG was not communicating as well as it should and in particular communication with BRAG could be improved
- However, the Climate Change Sub-group has been set up and a costings discussion was on the present agenda
- But little progress was made with international links although BRIG should be promoting international links (for example, CBD) with the countries
- The coordination of monitoring / surveillance of priority species and habitats and wider biodiversity was not being done

There was some discussion about the comment that coordination of monitoring/surveillance was not being done. People had two broad views about this; one was that it involved the coordination of survey and monitoring and the other was that it dealt with the analysis of information derived from survey and monitoring data.

It was agreed that the Information Gap work should identify some of the problems with survey and monitoring, although it remains unclear whose responsibility it is to resolve these problems.

Paul stated that it was the responsibility of BRIG to help Lead Partners and steering groups be aware of novel means of using data. For example, research now shows that carbon sequestration can be monitored and this correlates well with habitat condition. BRIG needs to make this type of information available to the steering groups and Lead Partners. BRIG also needs to identify gaps in surveillance and monitoring.

Further discussion considered the wider countryside and if we were looking at the non-priorities in the same way as the priorities? We need to identify what, other than the priorities, need monitoring. And the Countryside Survey data needed to be used more.

BRIG concluded that more work was needed and this would be informed by the Information Gap work and the 2005 Reporting Round.

**ACTION 14:** BRIG MEMBERS TO EMAIL PAUL ITEMS WITHIN THE TOR THAT THEY FEEL BRIG IS NOT COVERING. THESE WILL BE KEPT UNTIL THE 2005 REVIEW IS COMPLETED WHEN THEY WILL BE RECONSIDERED.

## 5. Standing items

### 5.1 Country groups (Wales, Scotland to table papers on the day; BRIG1104\_8\_Country reports)

#### Scotland

The Nature Conservation Act (Scotland) will be launched in Edinburgh on 29 November 2004 and is when the biodiversity duty on the country starts. The link to this launch is <http://www.biodiversityscotland.org.uk/>

#### Wales

The Minister for Environment Carwyn Jones is demonstrating a commitment to conservation and gave the opening address at the LBAP Seminar in Wrexham in September and spoke at the recent Wildlife Crime conference where he launched the Welsh Conservation Priorities or Law enforcement. . Both these speeches raised the profile of conservation and of wildlife crime.

The Wales Biodiversity Partnership recently discussed its role in relation to the UK BAP v the wider countryside. The discussion concluded that the Wales Biodiversity Partnership should continue to:

- Raise conservation / environmental awareness using LBAPs
- Contribute to identifying appropriate targets
- Develop the Section 74 lists
- Focus on priority species and habitats and LBAPs
- Develop a strategic direction for Wales within the WAG's Environment Strategy

#### England

Sarah spoke to the paper "BRIG1104\_8\_Country reports" circulated previously.

### 5.2 BRAG (BRIG1104\_9\_BRAG activities)

The BRAG sub-group most relevant to BRIG at the moment is the Monitoring Priorities Sub-Group. This sub-group will focus on priority species and habitats (which is a reversal of a previous decision). A three month contract has been let to identify research gaps in survey and monitoring.

**ACTION 15:** BRIG MEMBERS TO MAKE ANY INFORMATION THAT COULD HELP THIS WORK AVAILABLE TO THE SUB-GROUP. CONTACT RICHARD FERRIS AT <mailto:richard.ferris@jncc.gov.uk>

It was reported that BRAG was trying to focus on answering research questions using a three year research programme. Generally, the group considered wider biodiversity rather than having a focus on priority species and habitats.

The question was asked how BRIG could enhance communication with BRAG. BRAG need to know what in the broadest sense is inhibiting progress with the UK BAP. They have no contact with the UK BAP partnership and this is where BRIG could help. BRAG has been asked how we can make the most of the research question that will be posed to Lead Partners in 2005 reporting.

BRIG concluded that:

- We need to work closer with BRAG
- Paul to keep us informed of the success of our efforts
- Joint meetings may help

**ACTION 16:** PAUL TO SUGGEST RESEARCH GAPS THAT BRAG COULD CONSIDER IN THE MEDIUM TERM

**ACTION 17:** ANT TO SEND THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST PART OF THE INFORMATION GAP WORK TO BRAG BY THE MARCH STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

**ACTION 18:** BRIG TO INVITE BRAG TO SHOW WHERE WE CAN BE OF MOST HELP TO THEM

### 5.3 NBN

Ant summarised the NBN report. NBN is starting to identify the needs of LBAPS and Lead Partners and is developing projects to help satisfy their data requirements. The funding for the first project that will scope future work will come from a Defra contract but the project is awaiting Defra approval. Two further projects are also being scoped. All three are available from me but should be treated in confidence by members of BRIG for now because the projects have not been finalised.

**ACTION 19:** JIM TO APPLY HIS CONFIDENTIALITY NOTE TO THESE PAPERS AND TO SEND THEM TO BRIG MEMBERS

## 6. New items

### 6.1 Partnership Meeting 2004, Cardiff

This item was carried over from last meeting and therefore was rather out of date. However some general comments were made. BRIG felt that the partnership meeting was an opportunity to nurture the wider community into a biodiversity type of thinking and to use terms like “the usual suspects” was considered to detract from this aim. The partnership also needed to engage more with traditionally non-conservation sectors such as business and if possible attend any of their conferences. BRIG felt it was important to let the Standing Committee know of what we were doing in this regard (see comments under item 4.1 2005 Partnership Conference).

### 6.2 Target costings – carried over from last meeting

Pete gave an overview of the detailed costings work that had been done for the current priority species and habitats. This work yielded an estimate of a shortfall of £100 million per year for the first five years (1999 – 2004) followed by £150 million per year for the next five years. Ninety percent of these costs were for priority habitats. An independent review of actual BAP costs for a limited number of HAPs and SAPs (by Baker Sheppard & Gillespie) did not suggest any systematic bias in this estimate (i.e. it did not show that the estimated costs were typically too low or too high). However, the £100 million / £150 million values have widely been regarded as a serious underestimate because they did not take account of the land management costs for wide-ranging species.

Despite the considerable effort put into the costing work (it took an estimated one person-year), apart from RSPB, the original costing work has hardly been used. Perhaps this is because the information is not structured in a way that enables many direct questions to be answered such as, what are the agri-environment costs of priority species and habitats? A sub-group of the England Biodiversity Group has been considering this issue and has proposed to:

- (i) Conduct an assessment of the cost of any **increases** in HAP targets. This will require some input from Lead Partners / Steering Groups, and this could be done at a UK level. Since HAPs represent 90% of the current costs, this will give an approximation (that can be scaled accordingly) of the overall increased cost of the target **changes**.
- (ii) Develop a methodology for better estimating total SAP costs for widespread species, focussing in particular on agri-environment costs. At the moment the proposal is to do this for England, but the methodology might be useful in other countries too.

Wales stated that information on the cost of new priority species and habitats plans or any new targets for existing priority species and habitats was necessary for WAG to approve any changes proposed. However, Wales did not have the resources to estimate the cost of these and felt that adapting the previous costings work would not help.

No clear outcome of this discussion was forthcoming and overall clarity is required on the how and why costing can be carried out:

- BRIG needs to understand what costing information the country administrations need, and why they need it
- At present, the economics sub-group of the England Biodiversity Strategy is looking at what a costings exercise could involve - and what elements of the exercise should be done at a country or UK level and, if at UK level, who should contribute to this work?

**ACTION 20:** SARAH AND PETE TO REPORT TO BRIG ONCE THEY HAVE CONSULTED RELEVANT PARTIES ABOUT THE COSTINGS WORK

### 6.3 BRAG monitoring paper (BRIG1104\_10\_BRAG monitoring)

This was dealt with under item 5.2.

### 6.4 Note from the priority habitats umbrella group

Ant gave a verbal report on the meeting with the priority habitats steering group chairs held at JNCC on 10 November 2004.

- The different habitat groups agreed that measuring (or at least defining) habitat extent and condition were priorities
- However the coastal and marine HAP groups in particular had to address habitat dynamism as a priority. Similarly work on montane habitats was bringing habitat and species plans together to produce a more integrated montane environment plan. Broad philosophical approaches should be extracted and adapted for use across all habitats.
- There was a lot of interest in the possibility of using a sampling approach to determine extent and condition which is already showing its worth for grassland. Sampling-based proposals are being developed for woodlands as now all native broadleaf woodlands are priority habitats.

- It was recognised that the targets review will lead to some rewriting of the Habitat Action Plans
- There was also some discussion about the priority Habitat Action Plans and their management and target setting by the devolved countries and relationships with the UK biodiversity strategy workstream groups

Notes of this meeting will be posted on the JNCC website in early December 2005.

## **7. Next meetings**

7.1 Tuesday 8 February 2005, London and Tuesday 10 May 2004, venue to be decided.

**ACTION 21:** SARAH TO ORGANISE A ROOM IN LONDON FOR THIS MEETING.

**UK Biodiversity Reporting and Information Group**  
**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting – Regus House, Bristol, 22 November 2004**

**ACTIONS**

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