

9TH PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING ON NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Minutes

10:30, 7th February 2008,
Temple Quay, Bristol.

1. Attendance / apologies

Present

Hilary Thompson (Defra, Chair)
Huw Thomas (Defra)
Niall Moore (NNSS)
Mike Roberts (CSL)
Stephen Hunter (Defra)
Richard Cowan (Defra)
Paul Raven (EA)
Deryck Steer (JNCC)
Ian Mclean (JNCC)
Sallie Bailey (FC)
Christiana Purnell (Defra, minute taker)
Elaine Kendall (Defra, observing)

Apologies received from:

Peter McNabb (HMRC)
Ian Hooper (SG)
Angela Robinson (SG)
Mike Dunn (WAG)

HJT welcomed Sallie Bailey (representing the Forestry Commission) to her first PB meeting and introduced Elaine Kendall from Defra (observing). There was discussion as to the identity of the future WAG representative on the Board. IM queried the continuing lack of a representative on the PB from the Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform. HJT replied that HT had drafted a letter for Joan Ruddock to send to the relevant minister to

PB 9 Approved Minutes

elicit increased engagement [update for the Board: the letter has now been signed and sent by the Minister].

ACTION 1 – *NM to approach WAG to clarify the identity of their new PB representative.*

2. Minutes of meeting on 21 November 2007

Paper circulated – PB Feb08-02 Minutes of November meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

4.3. Actions/matters arising

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*Paper circulated – PB Feb08-03 Actions from November meeting
PB Feb08-03A NNS Indicator Tender Specification*

Action 1 – [Sec. to invite FC onto PB]. Discharged and the FC were represented at the meeting.

Action 2 – [HT to draft letter from Joan Ruddock to Transport Minister]. Discharged.

Action 3 – [Officials to get Ministerial approval for Govt. response]. Discharged. Ministerial approval given and the Government Response has been published.

Action 4 – [PB to comment on Implementation Plan]. Discharged.

Action 5 – [Officials/Secretariat to continue development of Implementation Plan]. Discharged – see PB Feb08-04A.

Action 6 – [HT to see if Cabinet Committee approval needed]. Discharged. HT had made enquiries and had been informed that, as the strategy document had not changed significantly since it was last seen by Cabinet Committee, it did not need further scrutiny.

Action 7 – [WAG and SG to comment on ministerial submissions and timings]. Discharged. HT informed the Board that the Scottish minister had agreed to put the strategy launch in his diary. The position with the relevant Welsh minister was still unclear. Joan Ruddock (Defra minister) is not available so HT had approached the SoS's Private Office to assess his availability – decision awaited.

Action 8 – [WAG to forward contact details of new staff]. Discharged [though more changes now underway].

Action 9 – [MS to send Tender Spec. for INNS indicator]. Discharged – see PBFeb08-03A.

Action 10 – [Send Rapid Response ToRs to PB]. Discharged.

Action 11 – [PB to comment on Rapid Response ToRs]. Discharged.

Action 12 – [Secretariat to convene Rapid Response Group]. Delayed to February 08. NM informed the Board that the first meeting of the Rapid Response Core Working Group was to take place on 27 February 2008 in York.

Action 13 – [HT to discuss monitoring with BRC]. Discharged – discussed under Agenda Items 5 and 6.

Action 14 – [Secretariat to amend monitoring flow diagrams]. Discharged.

PB 9 Approved Minutes

Action 15 – [Secretariat/IM to clarify resources from key agencies]. Deferred to next PB meeting due to lack of time for NM and IM to pursue this.

Action 16 – [Secretariat to include key actions in future work plan].
Discharged – see PB Feb08-08.

Action 17 – [EU progress on Secretariat website]. Discharged.

Action 18 – [Risk assessment summary]. Discharged – see PBFeb08-09.
Dealt with under Agenda Item 9.

Action 19 – [Miles Parker Briefing]. NM informed the Board that this is in progress. DS offered his assistance in applying encouragement if necessary.

Action 20 – [PB to comment on Media and Comms. Group composition].
Discharged.

Action 21 – [Secretariat to alter Media and Comms. ToRs etc.]. Discharged.

Action 22 – [PB to send suggestions for Media and Comms. Annexes].
Discharged.

Action 23 – [Issues for Secretariat website]. Ongoing.

Action 24 – [Cardiff Forum venue suggestions from WAG]. Discharged.

Action 25 – [Secretariat to assess Cardiff venues]. Discharged. NM informed the Board that the Millennium Stadium has been provisionally booked for May 29 and that he was to visit it on Feb 8.

Actions 26 and 27 – [Secretariat/Officials to draft Forum Programme].
Discharged – dealt with under Agenda Item 11.

Action 28 – [PB to suggest trade/industry invitees]. Dealt with under Agenda Item 11.

Action 29 – [SH to send papers for PB distribution]. SH informed the Board that both papers are still in the drafting stage and would be finalised and distributed by the end of March.

Action 30 – [PR to send WFD doc.]. Discharged.

ACTION 2 – *HT to contact Hilary Benn's private office to assess his availability for the Strategy launch.*

ACTION 3 – *NM to contact WAG to find out if their minister is available to take part in events for the Strategy launch.*

ACTION 4 – *Deferred action 15 [Secretariat (with assistance from IM) to attempt to clarify the resources devoted to non-native species issues by key departments and agencies].*

ACTION 5 – *Deferred action 19 [The Secretariat (in collaboration with IM) to draft a briefing for Miles Parker outlining the potential benefits of participation and detailing the background to NERC's negative response to the invitation to be part of the SSB].*

ACTION 6 – *Deferred action 29 [SH to send the draft Bee Health Strategy and papers related to the review of P. ramorum/kernoviae to the Secretariat to distribute to the PB].*

4. GB Strategy update

5 Papers circulated – PB Feb08-04A, 04B, 04C, 04D, 04E

HT introduced paper 04A (the Strategy Implementation Plan), outlining the changed notation for the priority ratings and mentioning the cost/expenditure column as being the most incomplete. He pointed out that the plan would be dynamic and would be displayed on the Secretariat website. The Board agreed that the document was sufficiently complete to be distributed to the

Stakeholder Sounding Board (SSB) for comment. The Board suggested that the SSB be prompted to comment particularly on the timings, relative priorities and how realistic the implementation plan was overall.

ACTION 7 – *NM to circulate the Implementation Plan to the SSB asking for comments (and adding a link to the draft strategy)- by 21 February.*

ACTION 8 – *NM to establish an SSB section on the secretariat website to facilitate their input - by 21 February.*

HT then introduced paper 04B - the three-month forward and reverse look, and paper 04C – the strategy launch timetable - for the Board to consider. He informed the Board that the timings were still on course for a 29 May launch, indeed the lack of necessity for Cabinet Committee clearance would allow several weeks leeway. NM advised that WAG need the finalised strategy text soon in order to begin translation into Welsh. HT mentioned the leaflet that was planned to help publicise the strategy launch. There followed discussion on the leaflet with DS suggesting a Gaelic version might be useful for Scotland. HJT queried the purpose of the leaflet, what it might cover and who was the target audience. HT suggested that the leaflet needed to be discussed with Communications Directorate (Defra) and the Media and Communications Group once the group was established. IM suggested that the leaflet needed to stress the preventative approach and HJT suggested different sections dealing with the main terrestrial, freshwater and marine issues. SB wondered if it should include a section on management. HJT suggested, and the Board agreed, that the outline framework of the leaflet needed to be circulated to the Board for comment. Other suggestions for inclusion were: a series of 'Dos' and 'Donts' and photographs of problem species and the native species upon which they impact.

ACTION 9 – *HT to investigate with Scottish colleagues the need or otherwise for production of a Gaelic version of the strategy launch leaflet – by 31 March.*

ACTION 10 – *Officials/Secretariat to produce draft strategy launch leaflet and circulate to the PB (and subsequently to the SSB and Media and Communications Working Group) – by 31 March.*

NM introduced paper 04D – the GB Strategy document outlining the (mainly minor) changes that had been made following the feedback at the public consultation. SB questioned the need for paragraph 3.1 and IM suggested that there was a need for greater clarity on resources. DS agreed with this and suggested the wording should reflect a commitment to ‘securing’ rather than ‘providing’ resources. HT and NM replied that the resource issue had been largely dealt with in the Government Response. MR emphasised the need to stress the philosophy of early intervention to save costs later as this is a more sustainable strategy. SH cautioned that over-emphasis on prevention in the absence of ‘proof’ of an impact was a difficult concept to sell in some quarters. RC, however, suggested that ministers had signed up to a precautionary approach in relation to potentially invasive fish. SH stressed the problem with waiting until there has been a demonstrable negative impact before action is undertaken (ring-necked parakeets being a good example). SB supported this and mentioned the case of grey squirrels where there were figures detailing costs of eradication at different stages of the eradication process. HJT stressed that there is no need to publicise conflict issues. IM suggested that in Chapter 7 surveillance needs to be linked to action and that Chapter 8 (after Key Action 8.8) could usefully contain examples of action such as the Tweed Forum.

IM suggested that the strapline could be altered to include more than just a protection of natural heritage theme. MR commented that there was no mention of EU-funded action on non-natives (e.g. under the LIFE-Nature Programme). DS suggested that overall there was a lack of mention of specific action that is occurring at the moment. HJT agreed and suggested that examples of terrestrial, marine and freshwater actions would be useful. PR suggested that in Annex 5 the BAP section needed to be moved to the

top. It was agreed that officials would amend the strategy document following input from the Board with a deadline on comments of February 15.

ACTION 11 – *SB to forward the information on costs of grey squirrel eradication at different stages of the eradication process to the Secretariat – ASAP and not later than 29 February.*

ACTION 12 – *All to submit comments to the Secretariat on the Draft Strategy document - by 15 February.*

ACTION 13 – *Secretariat and officials to finalise the strategy text following input from the PB – by 22 February.*

HT introduced the impact assessment document (paper 04E) and mentioned the reservations of the (Defra) Agriculture and Natural Resource Economics Team that options 1 (do nothing) and 2 (maintain status quo) were essentially the same. SH disagreed with this suggestion stating that there were tangible differences between the two (and monetary benefits of reverting to a 'do nothing' option). DS agreed with SH's comments. SB pointed out that two paragraphs needed alteration: 29 – deleting the last sentence would suffice and, paragraph 64 which needs redrafting as there will be a cost to industry. SH suggested that there needed to be more consideration of the impact of climate change and EK agreed to liaise with HT on drafting some suitable text. DS offered the advice of JNCC economists on the finalisation of the draft impact assessment document. PR mentioned the impact of possible tax relief for developers with Japanese knotweed infestations and the Board suggested looking at GISP and US Agriculture Department information for examples of economic costs. HJT advised that terrestrial examples were needed in paragraph 11.

ACTION 14 – *HT (in conjunction with EK) to draft suitable text for the Impact Assessment on the potential influence of climate change – by 31 March.*

ACTION 15 – HT to liaise with JNCC economists re. economic costs in the Impact Assessment – by 29 February.

5. Monitoring and Surveillance

NM introduced the topic, summarising the main concerns of the Board with the current monitoring proposals: costs (especially after the initial set-up); data validation, concentration on invasive/potentially invasive species and the practical utility of the portal.

HT reminded the Board how much stress the 2003 Defra review had made on the importance of monitoring and surveillance of non-native species. HJT agreed that a central data repository was needed but stressed that it should not be at the expense of action on the ground. The Board agreed with this sentiment highlighting the need for tangible results - for ministers to report and to show stakeholders that action was occurring on the ground. DS (who declared an interest as a trustee of the NBN) agreed with the priority being for action but stated that we also needed to build an evidence-base. There followed considerable discussion on timings, costings and engagement of volunteers and delivery bodies. The Board agreed that there should be some element of work commissioned this financial year.

6. Lunchtime talk: Mark Hill from Biological Records Centre, CEH

MH outlined the proposal to establish a central data repository for non-native species. He showed how the data, while displayed on a map at a 10km² resolution, could be used to rapidly ascertain the specific location of the record, the time the record was made and who made it. He highlighted the current dearth of distribution information for many of our scarcer non-native species e.g. midwife toad which has been present in England for over 100 years but still is not included in the NBN. He also outlined how judging invasiveness can be difficult *a priori* and collating data on all non-natives (not

just invasive or potentially invasive ones) would add little to the overall cost and he stressed the good value for money of a system using large numbers of volunteers. He also stressed the potential for interaction with European systems (such as any early warning system that is developed) and the provision for the PB of a synthesis of the best data available on existing species as well as new arrivals.

HJT thanked MH for his talk and opened the floor to questions. There followed considerable discussion on whether volunteers providing data would continue to do so if the data were then used to instigate rapid responses. It was concluded that this would be a problem for particular taxa (especially birds, reptiles and amphibians) but would not be an issue for the majority of non-native species (plants and invertebrates). There was also discussion on data validation and data security with MH pointing out the stringent data checking mechanisms in place with the NBN. He also outlined how the NBN operates a multi-layered system with respect to access to data.

The use of distribution information to raise awareness was also raised and discussed and this was agreed as a priority (while also making sure that the data were useful to the Board to underpin its decision making). The suggestion was made that a short list of invasive species could be used for this awareness-raising purpose - including some species that are currently in Europe and are a direct threat to GB. HJT stressed that the utility of any data repository needed to be sold to ministers and that the data should complement the 2010 and other government objectives.

The use of targeted surveys for particular species or alerts to raise awareness among recorders was discussed. The need for continuous interaction with data providers was stressed by DS. The Board agreed that work should begin on collating existing data and that a new contract should be drawn up between Defra and BRC (with revised costings) to carry out the following:

- Collate existing data on a range of non-native species;

- Start the process of engagement with volunteers;
- Explore the scope for targeted surveys or alerts for particular priority taxa.

ACTION 16 – NM, AT and HT to collaborate with MH in amending the proposal for a central data repository – by 29 February.

8.7. Rapid response and contingency planning

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Paper circulated – PB Feb08-07 Rapid response candidates

NM introduced this paper which detailed 11 species for potential rapid response action in 2008. This species list had been mainly derived (the exception being Oak Processionary Moth) from the risk assessments commissioned in the past year. The Board agreed that, for future reference, more information was needed for each species to facilitate their decision-making. This information includes:

- Introduction pathway(s) and how (or whether) we can close them off;
- Which organisations have responsibilities in relation to each species;
- Are there any public handling issues;
- Are there any timing issues (e.g. can control be carried out only in particular seasons).

The Board discussed the issues surrounding the potential for rapid response including the lack of powers of compulsory access and the potential public response. The Board agreed that the first five species (plus the African Clawed toad) were the most suitable for rapid response on a GB scale in 2008 and directed the Secretariat to help develop delivery plans in conjunction with the relevant agencies.

ACTION 17 – *NM to engage with relevant agencies to develop delivery plans for the six priority species - by 31 March.*

8. Secretariat Report

Paper circulated – PB Feb08-08 Secretariat report

NM introduced the report detailing the work of the Secretariat since the last PB meeting in November and HJT invited comments or questions. There were no questions or comments.

9. Risk assessment

Paper circulated – PB Feb08-09 Risk analysis mechanism summary

NM updated the Board on progress with the Risk Analysis Mechanism since its establishment. The main points of note are:

- 39 risk assessments (RAs) are being progressed through the mechanism;
- 20 RAs have been through the panel at least once;
- Only one RA (on Siberian chipmunk) has been completely through the mechanism;
- Risk assessments take longer to progress than anticipated;
- The estimated annual running costs for future years is 80-85K.

HJT suggested that the table outlining the preliminary results needed to have categories of organism more clearly shown. The Board agreed and suggested that the table (and the section on the secretariat website that will display the risk assessments) needed more structure – dividing the species into new arrivals, established species and those yet to arrive. RC queried the

large number of crayfish that had been risk assessed, particularly given the fact that the keeping of virtually all crayfish species is forbidden under the Crayfish Order 1996.

The Board also agreed that there needed to be more explicit management options attached to each risk assessment. NM explained that a risk management section would be produced for each risk assessment after the completion of the development project in August 2008. SH outlined how Plant Health displays its completed Pest Risk Analyses (PRAs) on its website for a three-month public consultation period and the Board agreed that this was a sensible option for risk assessments that have completed the review process. The Board also agreed that all risk assessments should be distributed to them before being displayed on the website.

There followed discussion on how to best elicit suggestions for the next tranche of risk assessments and the Board agreed that the Secretariat should send a formal letter to the relevant agencies and country non-native species working groups asking for suggestions and requesting a prioritised list of species for risk assessment. Using the individual country working groups (and not just government agencies) would allow input from industry and NGOs. The Board agreed that any requests from importers/industry could best be supported by offering the use of the risk analysis mechanism to review a risk assessment that they had produced. A discussion on flow diagrams and process maps concluded that for the strategy launch having a comprehensive set of flow diagrams linking the individual components of the non-native mechanism would be very useful.

ACTION 18 – *NM to send all completed risk assessments to the PB for comment prior to displaying them on the secretariat website - ASAP.*

ACTION 19 – *NM to send a formal letter to the relevant agencies and working groups requesting prioritised lists of species for risk assessments - by 31 March.*

ACTION 20 – *NM to send risk analysis flow diagrams to Sallie Bailey - ASAP.*

ACTION 21 – *NM to finalise flow diagrams for the component part of the non-native species mechanism and ensure they are linked - by 30 April.*

10. Public Awareness working group

NM updated the Board on progress on setting up the Media and Communications Working Group. Angela Robinson has agreed to chair it and the ToRs, list of invitees etc. have been finalised. The target date for its establishment is 29 February and invitation letters will be sent out shortly for the first meeting.

11. 2008 Stakeholder Forum

Paper circulated – PB Feb08-11 Draft Forum Programme

HJT introduced the draft Forum Programme outlining the reduction in the number of morning talks and the removal of the feedback sessions in the afternoon to allow more time for discussion in the workshops. The planned date is 29 May (the day following the launch of the Strategy) and the location is likely to be the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff [now confirmed]. HT suggested that the Media and Communications and Rapid Response Working Groups could provide panels for two of the workshops. The Board agreed that the strapline was suitable but that there was a general need to increase representation of business, trade and land-owners. The Board also agreed that there should be a workshop on surveillance and monitoring and that the

proposed one on pathway action plans was probably not necessary at this time. Furthermore, the Board agreed that there needed to be more time devoted to updating the Forum on progress in GB detailing the achievements of the risk assessment mechanism and how all parts of the non-native mechanism interact.

ACTION 22 – *NM to alter the Forum Programme and re-circulate to the PB for comment – by 15 February.*

12. EU and CBD Progress

Paper circulated – PB Feb08-12 EU IAS Conference Report

HT introduced his paper on the Madrid IAS conference highlighting the contribution of Patrick Murphy of the Commission and the fact that the EU has yet to decide whether to legislate or not and, if so, whether it would be a Directive or a Regulation. The Board expressed concern about the lack of interaction between different DGs of the Commission and the influence of DG Trade on any suggestions for progress from DG Environment. HT also informed the Board that GB was ahead of the rest of the member states in the co-ordination of its response to invasive species.

NM outlined the outcomes from the DAISIE meeting in Slovenia that he had attended. There was also the perception at this meeting that GB was 'ahead of the game' in Europe. NM informed the Board that for all taxa the number of invasions was increasing exponentially. The Board expressed interest in the costs of DAISIE and what its future is likely to be.

ACTION 23 – *NM to ascertain costs for the establishment and running of DAISIE - by 31 March.*

13. Updates on progress with Schedule 9 etc.

HT informed the Board that approximately 100 responses had been received to the consultation on amending Schedule 9 (of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA)) and proposals for banning the sale of certain invasive species.

14. Emerging issues – Large Tree Imports and import licences

Paper circulated – PB Feb08-14 Non-plant pest issues and PHS

SH outlined the paper that Steve Ashby has submitted to the Board for information. Plant Health Division is becoming increasingly worried over the import of large numbers of large plants (over 100,000 per annum: mainly trees, up to 10m in height). These trees come from many parts of the world with a large volume from China and some have a large number of hitch-hiker species associated with them. There followed a discussion on the lack of statutory powers of PHSI in relation to non-plant pests and who can effectively police the provisions of Section 14 of the WCA to not release non-native animal species into the wild.

NM briefly mentioned the Prevost's squirrel that was living ferally in Leeds and which had appeared on the NEWS and also mentioned the newly discovered ghost slug discovered in Cardiff. SH informed the Board that *Phytophthora ramorum* had been found on *Vaccinium* and that attempts were being made to eradicate it as the impact on heathlands could be serious. SH also informed the Board that *P. kernoviae* had been recently discovered in Scotland.

15. AOB

MR informed the Board that this was his final meeting as he would be retiring in March. SH is likely to remain the new agency representative on the Board. HT informed the Board that there had been formal approval for the establishment of a Chytrid Group. HT also asked the Board for its opinions on

PB 9 Approved Minutes

Key Action 10.1 from the Strategy and the Board agreed that its priority should be changed from High to Medium.

42.16. Date and location of next meeting.

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The next meeting is to be held in Cardiff on the evening before the Forum (28 May). The location for the following meeting was agreed as London (Nobel House) and the timing was agreed as late September.