

PROGRAMME BOARD ON NON-NATIVE SPECIES

TWENTY SIXTH MEETING

MINUTES

APHA, YORK

Thursday 29 October 2015, 11:00

1. Attendance / Apologies

Present:

Chris De Grouchy (Defra, Chair)
Niall Moore (NNSS, Secretary)
Olaf Booy (NNSS)
Mark Diamond (EA)
Tarquin Dorrington (Defra)
Richard Ferris (JNCC)
Roddy Fairley (SNH)
Julia Garritt (Forestry Commission)
Adrian Jowitt (NE)
Pete Robertson (APHA)
Trevor Salmon (Defra)
Gabe Wyn (NRW)
Justin Dixon (Defra, Plant Health)
Emma Boyd (Defra) - telecon
Catherine Murdoch (Scottish Government) – telecon
Craig Lee (Defra) – telecon
Martin Williams (Welsh Government) – telecon
Sarah Wood (NRW) - telecon

Apologies:

Dominic Pattinson (Defra, MSFD)
Hugh Dignon (Scottish Government)
Nick Bialynicki-Birula (NRW)
Colin Charman (NRW)
Nicola Spence (Defra, Plant Health)

2. Minutes of 25th Meeting on 18 March 2015

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-02

The previous minutes were signed off by the Board with no amendments.

3. **Actions/matters arising**

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-03

All actions were discharged with one exception and this action was carried over.

ACTION 1 (Previous Action 1) - **TS** to draft and circulate 'Duffer's Guide' for the EU Regulation.

4. **GB Strategy Implementation Plan**

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-04A

CL introduced this paper and asked the Board for comments. The plan was welcomed and agreed by the Board with the following comments:

- A risk register is needed to track issues with delivering the actions. CL agreed that this would be done.
- Much of the work is front-loaded for delivery in the first few years; delivery dates for some actions should be reconsidered so that they are more reasonably spread across the 5 year plan. A more considered programme of works may be useful based on priorities and linkages between actions. Work that we are required to do (i.e. by the EU regulation) should be highlighted.
- In some cases a more clearly defined lead needs to be provided.
- The actions are not always clear about the scale of work to be done (i.e. could be light touch or more substantial).
- It was noted that the assessment of the actions in the plan are relentlessly green; however this is because at this stage we have only begun to implement the actions. This may change as the plan is put into action and the colour coding will be used to highlight delivery issues.
- The NNSS will coordinate and monitor delivery of the plan across GB on behalf of the Board.

- Incident management (as well as rapid response) needs to be included as a task under one of the actions.

ACTION 2 – CL to draft risk register to accompany the implementation plan – by December 31.

ACTION 3 – CL and NNSS to provide a more clearly defined programme of work spread across the 5 year period. Requirements (i.e. by EU Regulation) should be highlighted – by November 30.

ACTION 4 – CL and NNSS to provide more clarity on leads, dates and scale of work to be done – by December 31.

ACTION 5 – NNSS to coordinate delivery of the plan across GB and report to the Board on issues inhibiting progress.

ACTION 6 – CL and MD to agree an additional task on incident management and add it to the Implementation Plan – by November 30.

Forward/backward look

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-04B

Whilst RF expressed concern on the rapid timescale for establishing the research working group, the Board approved the format of the forward and backward look.

Country working group feedback

CL informed the Board that the England Working Group has been re-convened and had met in September. The meeting had been well attended by NGOs, but less so by trade, industry and government agencies (MMO and FC were not represented on this occasion). The group will monitor delivery of the implementation plan in England and encourage an active role for NGOs, it will also provide a forum for information exchange and technical discussions.

MW reported that the Welsh Working Group was to date primarily a forum for information exchange. GW also noted it will be using the GB implementation plan to monitor delivery in Wales and has already undertaken a species prioritisation exercise.

CM reported that the Scottish Working Group carries out a significant programme of work. It is undertaking a species prioritisation exercise and will then use this to help prioritise action in Scotland.

The Board welcomed the new England Working Group and the continued valuable work of the Welsh and Scottish Groups.

The England Working Group has asked whether it should formally report to the Board. The Board agreed that formal reporting to it was not appropriate but that short verbal reports should be received from each country working group. The Board will use these to monitor progress. The working groups can also seek to bring issues to the attention of the Board via the NNSS.

ACTION 7 – Country working groups to provide (through their chairs) brief verbal reports to the Board on their activities and raise any issues for the Board’s consideration in advance of Board meetings.

Seniority of representation

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-04C

NM introduced this item and explained that the letter was produced with RF and TS at the request of the Board as a template for agencies to use to engage senior officials within their organisations. It was confirmed that no one had yet sent the letter.

The Board agreed with the principle of sending a letter but that it would not be appropriate to send the current letter at this time. Instead, the Board recommended that a similar, more engaging, letter be sent after an assessment of the required resources is undertaken (see below). The Board suggested that it may be better to send two letters: one in the near future to raise the awareness of CEOs and explaining the Board’s plan to assess resource needs, the second, once there was a better assessment of resource needs, asking CEOs to consider how resources would be met and on that basis the level of representation required at meetings.

There was general agreement that the letters should come from the administrations rather than from within the agencies or the NNSS.

This issue was discussed in conjunction with the issue of resource needs (below).

Resource needs

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-04D

The Board was broadly happy with the approach set out in the paper to use working groups and others to assess resource requirements. It recommended 3 main stages to the work:

1. Prioritisation. To make the task simpler, the Board recommended that the resource assessment should focus on priority tasks. CL was tasked with identifying key priorities from the implementation plan.
2. Assess the resource needs for priority actions. This will be coordinated by the NNSS.
3. On the basis of resource needs consider how best to obtain buy-in from senior officials.

GW noted that IPENS has already costed some actions from the GB implementation plan, which may be useful.

RF noted that the assessment of resources should take into account contingency planning. The model for funding contingency responses was discussed. It may be possible to fund contingency responses through normal internal agency processes etc. However it may be necessary to engage with those that hold contingency budgets (e.g. the Civil Contingencies Secretariat) or escalate issues to them. MD noted that the EA has a formal approach to incident management approach that relies on the reallocation of existing resources to the priority incidents.

MD noted that if we had a better assessment of how much was already spent and on what areas it may be possible to redeploy effort in times of need.

The Board discussed the importance of engaging with the objective setting for agencies to ensure INNS are built in as a priority. In some cases (e.g. for APHA) this will need to be done quickly as the negotiations are happening now.

As part of the review of resource requirements, CdG asked the NNSS to further explore which mechanisms would be appropriate to influence agency objectives and funding of resource requirements.

<p>ACTION 8 – CL to identify key priorities for resource assessment, based on the implementation plan – by November 30.</p>
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ACTION 9 – NNSS to coordinate the review of resource requirements, using working groups and others.

ACTION 10 – NNSS to explore which mechanisms are most appropriate for securing necessary resources and influencing agencies.

ACTION 11 – Defra, SG and WG to draft and agree a first letter to be sent to agency CEOs etc. this year to raise their awareness of the work programme agreed by the Board, and subsequently to send a further letter seeking their buy-in and commitment.

5. Contingency plans

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-05

TS introduced this paper. The Board agreed that this is a useful approach and that further generic plans should be developed to cover all of the listed horizon scanning species and those proposed for the EU Regulation and that these should be grouped into the seven categories suggested with a generic set of principles for each plus any species-specific issues in annexes. The Board agreed that they should be expanded to cover GB and that this was a role that the Rapid Response Working Group (RRWG) should take on. The RRWG should also consider how contingencies will work in cross border situations, e.g. River Severn between England and Wales. The Board agreed that it was for administrations to sign off the plans in negotiation with agencies.

MD stressed the need for guidance to support contingency responses, e.g. the EA uses a risk assessment for likely pathways of spread to help respond to new aquatic invasions. OB agreed and noted that each of the plans identified guidance needs. Guidance for communications was considered particularly relevant.

The Board noted that improved surveillance may be important to support contingency responses and OB commented that this was also something that had been highlighted in the process of drawing up the plans.

OB highlighted the issue that government currently has a small number of specialist teams capable of delivering contingency responses (i.e. the APHA terrestrial vertebrate control team and the EA fish eradication team). When reviewing how to resource responses it will be important to consider the role of and funding model for such teams. AJ stressed the importance of maintaining specialist capacity within Government and the Board agreed.

ACTION 12 – NNSS (in collaboration with relevant agencies) to develop contingency plans for all listed horizon and EU Regulation species, using generic plans where possible. Plans should include guidance and surveillance requirements where appropriate.

ACTION 13 – NNSS to ensure Rapid Response Working Group includes expanding the English contingency plans to all of GB within its work plan – by November 30.

ACTION 14 – Defra, SG and WG to sign off plans, in conjunction with actions to identify how resource requirements will be met.

6. EU Regulation

TS provided an update on progress with the EU Regulation, most notably the proposal for the first list of IAS of Union Concern. There will be a vote in the Committee on the 4th December on the full list of 37 species. There are some concerns over the quality of risk assessments, and in the assessment of risk management factors by the Commission. The UK met with the Commission to discuss these and other points, and the UK will continue to raise these issues with the Commission.

ACTION 15 – TS to circulate the note of the September meeting with the European Commission - by November 16.

7. Rapid response updates from Agencies

EA, NE, APHA and MMO

AJ reported that the American bullfrog eradication is going well. Fewer bullfrogs than expected have been discovered. Control methods include: draining ponds, shooting with air rifles and fyke netting.

MD reported that the water primrose eradication continues: of the 28 known sites, eradication has been completed at 11, 16 are under management and one has yet to be treated. It is hoped that the ban on sale will reduce the number of new populations being discovered.

MD noted that in the past few months two additional Topmouth Gudgeon sites have been discovered in England, bringing the total that EA are currently managing to five (of the original 23 sites in England, 18 have been eradicated). There were originally three sites in

Wales, at one of which TMG has been eradicated but there are currently no plans to eradicate the remaining two.

PR reported that Monk Parakeet numbers are down from over 100 to about 40. The control has removed one population completely and contained the other two. There remain issues over access and agreement to manage in some sites.

Eradication would be very achievable with full access to all sites and control orders could be used to overcome this barrier. Ruddy Duck numbers are down from a peak of 6000 to <40. In Europe they are being controlled in France (120 shot out of 143), but only two out of 47 have been shot in the Netherlands.

Note: all species except Monk Parakeet are being proposed for listing under the EU Regulation which will ban their keeping, sale, etc.

CL reported that the consultation on the Species Control Order code of practice would be launched shortly.

TS reported on the deliberate mass release of several hundred American Lobsters and Dungeness Crabs which had taken place off the coast of southern England in June. The MMO have led the response and this, plus accidental catches, has resulted in c. 200 out of a suspected 360 lobsters being recaptured. Initial indications suggest the lobsters may not have dispersed as much as initially feared. The potential for a population to establish as a result of this release is as yet unknown.

NM reported that a new species to GB, the Gulf Wedge Clam, was recently reported from the River Witham in Lincolnshire. It is native to the Gulf of Mexico and has already established in Belgium. A rapid risk assessment was currently being produced.

8. Secretariat Report

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-08

The Board commended the report.

9. Pathway Action

Marine pathway project

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-09

GW spoke to this paper. The Board commended the work of the Marine Pathways Group and stated that it is an important group that does excellent work in a difficult area. The Board would welcome continued updates from the group. However, the Board also agreed that the work of this group fits more closely with the MSFD and conversations should continue with MSFD colleagues about the potential for the group to report directly to them.

Zoos Pathway Action Plan (PAP)

NM reported that the NNSS had established a working group to produce a PAP for zoos and this has had two productive meetings. It is intended that the draft PAP will be ready for the Board's scrutiny at its next meeting.

10. LIFE+ Bids

AJ updated on the recent Life+ bid to manage aquatic INNS pathways that had to be pulled despite agreed funding from NE because other agencies/parts of government were unable to commit to more than one year's funding. There was concern that a bid of this importance was unable to proceed, given pathway management is a priority for GB as is accessing additional resources. The Board shared this concern, particularly on the issue of not being able to commit funding for more than a year, which was an obvious block on progressing bids, and recommended relaying the message to Richard Findon in Defra and discussed other potential sources of funding in future (e.g. water companies).

11. UK Island Restoration

Paper circulated PB Oct 15-11

NM introduced the paper. The Board acknowledged the high priority of islands and the good work on prioritisation that had been done and the value of this work in assisting with identifying priorities for management in GB. However, they expressed concern over suggestions to develop another strategy. The Board felt that it was also necessary to consider these priorities in context with all of the other priorities in GB.

Overall the Board agreed it was a useful exercise and recommended the NNSS maintain its involvement in the development of a strategic framework for island restoration. The Board asked to be kept informed of progress.

12. AOB

Science Advisory Council

TS raised the issue of the request for invasive non-native species research/policy to be reviewed by the Science Advisory Council. The Board agreed that the request should be accepted, although some concerns were raised about demands on time.

13. Date and location of future meetings

To be held in York, ideally Foss House. NNSS to scope for dates in April 2016.