

## **GB Non-native Species Media and Communications Working Group**

**Meeting 1, 27 March 2008**

11.00, London Zoo, London

### **Minutes**

#### **1. Attendance and apologies**

Present: Angela Robinson – Scottish Government (Chair)  
Niall Moore – NNSS (Secretary)  
Chris Chiverrell - CIRIA  
Jim Collins – PCT  
Suzanne Cooper – Scottish Environment Link  
Keith Davenport – OATA  
David Gilchrist – HTA  
Mike Heylin – FACT  
Jo Hughes - CCW  
Robin Payne – SNH  
Angela Taylor - Defra  
Mark Tollitt – Defra (Marketing)  
Paul Walton – Wildlife and Countryside Link  
Ruth Waters – NE

Apologies: Lara Clements – Defra (Marketing)  
Jo Long – SEPA  
Meinir Wigley – CCW (Replaced by Jo Hughes)

#### **2. Terms of Reference and Membership**

NM welcomed all to the meeting and apologised that, at the chairperson was delayed at Heathrow, he would be chairing the meeting until she arrived. All of the attendees introduced themselves and briefly outlined their roles. NM introduced the terms of reference for the working group and asked for comments. KD enquired what the available resources were likely to be for the strategy and suggested that knowledge of an indicative budget would be helpful. There followed a discussion on resourcing with KD and DG stressing the importance of learning lessons from past mistakes with under-resourcing in this area (namely the Horticulture CoP). The chicken and egg nature of the issue was noted with MT stating that you need to build a coherent case to present to Ministers to justify any plea for resources. The group agreed that resources were critical to success and that a reasonable level of financial support was needed from government.

The group discussed other potential members and representatives from the following were suggested: Local Government Association, Landscape Institute, Association of Professional Landscapers, BERR and BASC.

PW suggested that training needed to be more explicitly mentioned in the ToRs and, following discussion, the group agreed that it should have a more explicit mention, although not as a separate bullet.

KD stressed that there are a lot of organisations doing the right thing and this should be highlighted by government – positive feedback being most productive.

**ACTION 1** – All to send suggestions for extra members of the group to NM.

**ACTION 2** – NM to alter the ToRs along the lines agreed by the group.

### **3. Timings/reporting**

NM stated that the Media and Communications Strategy was to be delivered to the Programme Board by December 31, 2008. RP suggested that this should include an implementation plan and KD pressed for quick wins ahead of a finalised strategy and implementation plan.

### **4. Key target audiences**

*Paper circulated – MC Mar08-04*

NM introduced the topic and there followed a wide-ranging discussion on who else should be included as key target audiences. Several suggestions were made at the meeting and it was agreed that all would take an action to supply suggestions for key audiences to NM. The group agreed that the approach of deciding on and prioritising key target audiences would be better if it was replaced by a more wide-ranging examination of stakeholders, their influence, optimal ways of reaching them etc. as well as their re-ordering into functional groups. MT suggested that the next meeting of the group be taken up with carrying out a Stakeholder Analysis and, after discussion, this was agreed as a sensible approach.

Other important audiences that were suggested were: national and local government, Devolved Administrations, Crown Estates, Defence Estates, MoD, CLA, Land-owners generally, Gamekeepers, BASC, packing industries (especially wood), Road Transport Association, rail and sea transport, Association of River Trusts, Institute of Fisheries Management, Association of Game Fisheries Managers, British Trout Association, Professional Coarse Fisheries Association, Ramblers' Association, NFU, Hardy Plants Society, HRDA (formerly the Henry Doubleday Research Organisation) and sectoral press.

DG expressed concern about the differing priorities of different NGOs and others in this area producing mixed messages for the public.

The lack of relevant information on non-native species for staff in some government agencies was pointed out by MH and KD.

There followed discussion on whether it would be useful if the Defra Secretary of State wrote to Chief Executives of Defra Agencies and Secretaries of other Government Departments highlighting the importance of the non-native species issue within government. The group concluded that government needs to lead by example and the NGO/Industry component of the group agreed to draft a letter to the SoS [and ministers in Scotland and Wales] highlighting this.

KD suggested that including messages on fishing licences would be an excellent way to reach over 4 million anglers, though there may be insufficient space when small plastic card licences are introduced.

**ACTION 3** – All to submit suggestions for additions to the list of stakeholders to NM - ASAP.

## 5. Key messages

AR took over as the meeting chairperson and introduced the topic of key messages. A photocopied page, containing 'key basic messages', from the 2003 Policy Review was circulated. The group agreed that, as these messages are currently written more as objectives they need to be altered to turn them into usable messages. The group also agreed that key messages are important and that there was a need to have a small number of key messages (2-3 at most) with any others as subsidiary ones. Wording similar to 'Animals and Plants have their place' as a headline message was agreed by the group as being suitable. This wording would help avoid demonising individual species.

RW highlighted the importance of stressing nativeness and the group agreed that there was a need to have a stock, usable definition of nativeness in a British context to avoid endless confusion and debate on the topic.

AR suggested that using example species was good for illustrating issues relating to non-native species with the public.

There was some discussion on linking the non-native issue with climate change in order to raise its profile. The group agreed that this 'piggy-backing' should be done if it was useful for improving awareness.

**ACTION 4** – MT to draft 2-3 key messages (with several subsidiary ones) for distribution to the group.

## 6. Optimal ways of reaching key target audiences - tools

*Paper circulated – MC Mar08-06*

MT introduced paper 6 which Defra Marketing had compiled and which details potential tools that can be used for getting messages across. MT stated that the methods were concentrated on the lower cost end of the spectrum and that the document does not include 'audience insight' aspects. There followed discussion on the efficacy of potential tools and several suggestions were made. MH suggested contacting the Department for children, schools and families [and relevant government departments in Scotland and Wales] about targeting Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils by producing packs for teachers. KD suggested targeting LANTRA/horticultural colleges and suggested that many sectoral magazines often run articles *verbatim* as they are desperate for copy. MH noted that readership of sectoral press can be small (e.g. 55,000 out of 4.1million anglers). PW enquired about replacement of invasive species with similar native ones. DG mentioned the National Plant Specification and the difficulty of getting practitioners to use it and suggested that any alternative species need to be as good as the species replaced. KD suggested that replacement species also needed to be risk assessed.

RP emphasised that we needed to be innovative in our approach to targeting people and pointed out the good work done in the US by 'Habitatude', 'Smart Disposals' and 'Stop Aquatic Hitch-hikers' campaigns and suggested getting a speaker over from the US later in the year. MH suggested the need for a one-word brand name. PW suggested a series of documentaries – perhaps from the BBC Natural History Unit. Another suggestion was to look at the Council of Europe's Code of Practice.

<b>ACTION 5</b> – All to feed ideas for potential tools to NM to collate and pass on to MT.
---

## 7. Media and Communications Strategy – outline contents

After some discussion it was agreed that the Media Strategy should contain the following elements:

Short introduction

Objectives

Implementation Plan

Resources needed for individual elements

Prioritised key targets (audiences)

Key messages

A set of committed principles (e.g. definitions of non-nativeness etc.)

MT agreed that his team would start to flesh out the strategy based on the discussions at this meeting.

**ACTION 6** – NM to draft list of key principles and circulate them to the group.

**ACTION 7** – MT to take forward drafting the Strategy document for circulation to the group for discussion at the next meeting.

## **8. Codes of Practice**

NM informed the group that part of its remit was to oversee the re-branding and dissemination of Codes of Practice to ensure that the launch of any subsequent codes was more successful than that of the Horticulture Code. AR stressed that the group would help ensure a consistency of approach and style. AT outlined progress with the Pet Code of Practice. The group discussed the inadequacies of the approach taken with the Horticulture Code (these included: inadequate distribution, lack of government promotion and it being rather long and 'dry'). The group agreed that re-visiting the Horticulture Code - tweaking the wording and style, would be useful as would progressing the Pet Code. Ministerial approval would then be sought and both codes launched and promoted along with any other suitable codes.

**ACTION 8** – NM to send the link to the Horticulture Code of Practice to all.

**ACTION 9** – AT to send the current version of the Companion Animal (Pet) Code of Practice to all.

## **9. Baseline survey of public awareness**

NM outlined the reasons behind conducting a baseline survey and suggested that it might be suitable to piggy-back this on a survey that Defra are planning on public attitudes to Wildlife Management. Views were sought from the group and, following discussion, there was general agreement that a survey would be a useful benchmark of public attitudes. It would provide a solid platform for the Media Strategy and would ensure that we were not just basing our strategy on our assumptions of what were peoples' attitudes. MT pointed out that such a survey was vital for informing Ministers. The group also agreed that coupling the survey to the planned survey of public attitudes to wildlife management would be a sensible use of resources.

**ACTION 10** – NM and AT to take forward the organisation of the baseline survey and to ensure the group feeds into the process.

## 10. AOB

NM mentioned the forthcoming launch of the GB Strategy and the fact that the Secretary of State in England as well as Scottish and Welsh ministers were to launch it on May 28.

PW raised the issue of potential LIFE+ (Information and Communication) funding for a Europe-wide awareness raising campaign on invasive species. 50% match funding would be required. The next application deadline is 30 November.

**ACTION 11** – All to send NM suggestions for Ministerial activities to launch the GB Strategy.

**ACTION 12** – MT to investigate LIFE+ as a potential source of funding.