

7TH PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING ON NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Minutes

**10:00, 10th July 2008
Victoria Quay, Edinburgh.**

1. Attendance/apologies

Present:

Hilary Thompson (Defra, Chair)

Niall Moore (NNSS)

Verity Hunter (NNSS)

Mike Dunn (WAG)

Mike Roberts (CSL)

Stephen Hunter (Defra)

Richard Cowan (Defra)

Paul Raven (EA)

Ian Hooper (Scottish Executive)

Angela Robinson (Scottish Executive)

Ian McLean (JNCC)

Apologies received from:

Victoria Waite (DfT)

Huw Thomas (Defra)

Peter Starling (HMRC)

Deryck Steer (JNCC)

2. Minutes of meeting on 21 March 2007

Paper circulated – PB Jul07-02 (Paper 02) Minutes of March meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and there were no matters arising.

3. Actions/matters arising

Paper circulated – PB Jul07-03 (Paper 03) Actions from March meeting

Action 1 – Angela Robinson is taking the lead on this and is producing a paper – DEFER delivery of paper to next PB meeting.

Action 2 – Paper 03A was the report on PB Secretary's attendance at the Ireland Steering Group meeting in November. No comments were received.

Action 3 – Ongoing. PR will prepare a briefing document for the new Defra biodiversity Minister, Joan Ruddock.

Actions 4–12 - All discharged.

Action 13 – Discussed under agenda item 6.

Actions 14-20 – All discharged.

Action 21 – NM informed the PB that the Defra Survey Control Unit Liaison Office had been approached. It was agreed that Ministers could be informed of the proposed questionnaire survey on baseline public attitudes when briefing new Ministers across Administrations.

Action 22 – Comments were received from HT and AR and these were passed to David Slawson in PHSI. DS has since been in contact with AR.

Action 23 – Huw Thomas has been in informal contact with FC - DEFER delivery of paper to next PB meeting.

ACTION 1 – AR to produce a document on mechanisms of rapid response for the next PB meeting.

ACTION 2 – Officials to take forward briefing of relevant Ministers (to include indicative costs, contingency planning, Water Framework Directive, flood risk and plans for a questionnaire survey).
Once Ministerial agreement obtained, costs to be finalised.

ACTION 3 - HT to talk to all three Administrations about Forestry Commission participation on the PB and circulate a short paper for discussion at the next PB meeting.

4. GB Strategy update

Papers circulated – PB Jul07-04A, PB Jul07-04B, PB Jul07-04C

NM presented an update on the public consultation (Paper 04A) and tabled an addendum that summarised the main issues raised by respondents. He pointed out that the majority of comments were very positive. HJT commented that the lack of input from the commercial sector was a cause for concern. IM commented on the lack of input from the transport sector and the PB agreed that there should be more engagement. This should be included as a risk in the Ministerial briefing.

ACTION 4 – NM to write to the Pet Care Trust with a copy of the consultation and advise them that their views would be welcome.

ACTION 5 – HT to produce a letter from Joan Ruddock to the relevant Transport Minister seeking increased engagement.

AR summarised Paper 04B and explained the two documents: an Implementation Plan with Key Actions and a Reporting Document. The different options for populating the table were discussed. It was agreed that the table should be publicly available on the website including high-level

budgetary information to help reinforce stakeholder engagement with the strategy. Links in the document could lead to more detail where required.

There was discussion on who were the target audiences for the documents. HJT suggested that the documents needed to be non-technical to aid engagement with a wider audience. It was agreed that road-testing the document on the new Stakeholder Sounding Board would be useful.

The PB agreed that ownership of the Implementation Plan should be the responsibility of the Secretariat on behalf of the PB.

AR then presented the draft Master Reporting Document. Following discussion it was agreed that the Reporting Document needed milestones with resource implications, risks to delivery and deliverables against them.

SH suggested that the reporting document needed a GANTT chart setting out timelines and dependencies and this was agreed. The PB also agreed that the current document was too detailed. It needed to be succinct and include a Red/Amber/Green reporting system. Comments should be reduced to 'one liners' and used sparingly and there needed to be a priority/weighting on individual actions to aid interpretation. Once agreed, progress needs to be reported at each PB meeting.

ACTION 6 – AR to send the 'on screen' document to the PB for it to comment on (on gaps, appropriateness of columns etc.) by August 31.

ACTION 7 – Secretariat, HT and AR to discuss developing and enhancing the master reporting document in line with the PB's comments.

ACTION 8 – Secretariat to distribute the proposed reporting document and implementation plan (following PB feedback) to the SSB for feedback by September 30.

AR introduced Paper 04C - the planned launch timetable for the finalised strategy. In discussion PB members expressed concerns that, with new ministers in all three administrations, an October launch was no longer realistic. It was decided to defer the launch until spring 2008 and to produce a Government Response document for release in autumn 2007 to coincide with publication of the Summary of Responses document. MR suggested that it was important to maintain momentum and to deliver a contingency plan in advance of the strategy. This contingency planning is closely allied with the rapid response paper that AR is currently progressing.

HJT suggested and it was agreed by all that there is a need for 18 months of solid deliverables included in the submission for ministers. IH suggested that the cost implications for central government need to be made more explicit and that this also needs to be finalised in the implementation document.

ACTION 9 – *Secretariat to draft the government response to the Strategy consultation for distribution to the PB by August 31.*

ACTION 10 – *Officials to develop an 18 month action plan in line with the development of the reporting document and Gantt chart and distribute them to the PB by August 31.*

ACTION 11 – *HT to redraft the timetable to account for a Spring 2008 launch of the Strategy by August 31.*

5. Secretariat report

Paper circulated – PB Jul07-05 (Paper 05)

There were no substantive comments on the Secretariat report but the PB did agree that it was important to have a prioritised list of key actions for the Secretariat and that these need to be integrated with the Strategy implementation plan.

It was agreed that with the different non-native species initiatives underway, including through Bern and the EU, plus the Water Framework Directive, PB members should inform the Secretariat of relevant forthcoming meetings and the Secretariat will then circulate this information to members.

ACTION 12 – *Secretariat to include website summary with the secretariat report for next PB meeting.*

ACTION 13 – *Secretariat to draw up list of key actions/ deliverables for itself that are linked into the strategy implementation plan.*

ACTION 14 – *PB to feed information on relevant meetings involving invasive non-native species to the Secretariat for distribution to the PB – ongoing.*

6. Risk assessment

NM updated the PB on the current situation with the NNRAP (the risk analysis panel) and distributed two flow diagrams for individual risk assessments – one outlined the standard progress of a risk assessment through the mechanism and the other outlined the proposed fast track procedure. RC questioned whether the intention was to have a full risk assessment subsequent to producing management options during the rapid risk assessment procedure. NM agreed that this was the intention although it might not always be possible - SH pointed out that this may not be necessary if the rapid assessment concluded that the risk was low or management options not possible.

ACTION 15 – *Secretariat to send electronic copies of the two flow diagrams to the PB ASAP.*

ACTION 16 – *PB to feed back comments on the two flow diagrams by July 31.*

AR outlined plans for a project to further develop the risk assessment methodology. NM and AR have drawn up the project specification (based on the recommendations of the RPS peer review report) and this is with the Scottish Executive for consideration for funding. The total cost is likely to be approx. GB£60K with contributions from all three administrations.

ACTION 17 – *AR to draft and distribute a formal request to the three administrations for financial contributions on the risk assessment project by August 31.*

7. Stakeholder Sounding Board

NM updated the PB on progress on establishing the Stakeholder Sounding Board: 22 organisations have been invited to be on the Board. The Secretariat circulated the final list of organisations and the letter of invitation.

8. Stakeholder Forum

Paper circulated – PB Jul07-08 (Paper 08) Draft Forum Proceedings

HJT asked for the PB's views of the May Stakeholder Forum. Whilst the feedback from the PB and attendees was generally very good, the PB noted that there was a noticeable lack of attendance from local government and industry which needed to be addressed. There was discussion on the balance between presentations and workshops and it was agreed that more time was needed to fully explore issues in the workshop sessions. The importance of taking forward actions from the workshops was stressed and it was agreed that for this year the Forum would be included as part of the strategy consultation report.

There were several suggestions for the 2008 Forum, including having a session devoted to land-owners and managers to explore how they can optimally input into action against invasive non-native species. It was agreed that Wales would host the 2008 event (probably in Cardiff).

ACTION 18 – *Secretariat to incorporate outputs from the workshops into the Summary of Responses document by August 31.*

ACTION 19 – *PB to send suggestions for the 2008 Forum, including names of land-owners' representatives to the Secretariat before next PB meeting.*

9. Monitoring and surveillance mechanism

Paper circulated – PB Jul07-09 (Paper 09) Final report from BRC

NM summarised the conclusions of the final report on the scoping study which WSC commissioned from Biological Records Centre, British Trust for Ornithology and the Marine Biological Association. There was considerable debate on the merits of the existing proposal to establish a non-native species portal. It was pointed out that using the NBN was piggybacking on existing infrastructure and schemes but that there was a need for significant resources to enhance some of the schemes. The PB expressed concern on the proportion of the costs being spent on co-ordination rather than on analysis and interpretation as well as on specific support for schemes. It was agreed that, as currently formulated, the proposal was unclear on how it would deliver increased and more rapid intelligence on which the PB could base its decisions. In summary it was generally agreed that, while accepting the need for more comprehensive intelligence, the current proposal was not fit for purpose. It was also pointed out that the monitoring needs to be more fully integrated with the risk assessment mechanism.

It was agreed that the PB needed to decide what its specific needs were and that this would be the basis for a revised bid. The Secretariat would lead (with help from IM and HT) on drawing up a short (one page) specification on the needs of the non-native species mechanism based on specific feedback from the PB. This would be then be debated specifically at the next PB meeting if it had not been dealt with beforehand.

ACTION 20 – *PB to respond to the Secretariat with specific comments on the current proposal by August 17.*

ACTION 21 – *NM, IM and HT to draft a short 'information needs analysis' paper for consideration by the PB by September 15.*

10. Public Awareness working group

NM reported that no progress had yet been made on setting up a pre-Working Group on Public Awareness. The PB urged the Secretariat to set up the pre-working group as soon as was practicable.

ACTION 22 – *The Secretariat to establish the pre-Public Awareness Working Group by August 31.*

11. Reports on progress with *Ludwigia* and Bumblebees

NM verbally updated on progress with *Ludwigia* – the control project is ongoing but there has been some regrowth in the main site in Hampshire. The Secretariat will circulate the final project report when it becomes available and will investigate the need for further funding this year.

IM updated on the current position with the use of non-native sub-species of Bumblebees. The taxonomic status of the sub-species of bumblebees is also open to question as lack of interbreeding between different sub-species means that some may be full species. The importing companies are likely to apply for licences to import and sell the bees in the near future. The Secretariat is commissioning a rapid risk assessment.

NM updated the PB on the current position with bullfrogs in Essex. There has been little action this year by Natural England apparently due to resourcing issues although surveying and control are planned in the near future.

NM informed the PB that the Secretariat had received a report of 'Japanese frogs' in Cambridge in early July. This report had been followed up by secretariat staff and Natural England had been informed. Investigations were continuing.

SH reported on the current position with Oak processionary moth and the current control in west London. This is being led by Forest Research with Defra and the local Environmental Health Department also involved.

RC informed the PB on the current position with marbled crayfish. This is a parthenogenic species that is banned from being kept in Britain but which has recently been discovered in captivity in England by Cefas (after a tip-off from a stockist). As this species can breed from a single female it is likely that any females being kept in captivity will increase in numbers and these may then be released into the wild. Cefas has put out a press release warning of the dangers of this species in an attempt to prevent the establishment of another invasive crayfish species in the wild.

ACTION 23 – *NM to contact Tom Tew of Natural England to explore NE's engagement and the way forward by NE on the bullfrog and alleged Japanese frog issues.*

12. European meetings on NNS

Paper circulated – PB Jul07-12 (Paper 12) Developing an EU Framework

NM outlined the main conclusions from HT's paper on the recent meeting in Brussels on Developing an EU Framework for Invasive Alien Species. The meeting was organised by DG Environment but DG Sanco also was in attendance as were several NGOs. There was some discussion on the merits and problems of having an EU Directive or Regulation on IAS which would impose the need for action at member state level. Comments are needed by mid August to compile a response to DG Environment.

On behalf of HT, NM updated the PB on the Bern Convention Meeting on IAS in Reykjavik in May. It appears that the UK is well ahead of most European countries in relation to action on non-native species. The meeting was strongly supportive of UK actions on non-natives, including the ruddy duck eradication programme, the risk analysis mechanism and plans for more comprehensive monitoring. IM queried what had happened to the Bern Convention list of the 'Top 100' IAS species in Europe and this led to a discussion on the merits of the black versus white listing approaches and the Secretariat agreed to research the position on the Bern Convention list.

ACTION 24 – *PB to send comments to Huw Thomas on the 'Development of an EU Framework on Invasive Alien Species' paper (PB July-07-12) by August 17.*

ACTION 25 – Secretariat to circulate HT's report on the Reykjavik Bern Convention meeting on IAS ASAP.

ACTION 26 – Secretariat to investigate progress on the Bern Convention's 'Top 100' list.

13. Emerging issues

Papers circulated – PB Jul07-13 and PB Jul07-13A

NM introduced a paper from Tracy Edwards (JNCC) proposing the setting up of a Marine Working Group. The PB recognised that marine issues require a different approach to freshwater and especially terrestrial issues. However, the PB agreed that the current proposal was too cumbersome, open ended and needed to have more focus. It was agreed that if required to respond to particular Marine issues, a small group of experts could be established and chaired by the Secretariat, which would meet when required but not more than three times a year. The group would respond to particular issues on which the PB required a specialist marine input. It was also agreed that it would be set up with a limited lifespan and specific objectives.

NM introduced a paper on the Cardiff Bay risk assessment meeting held in December 2006. This was welcomed by the PB as an interesting and useful approach.

ACTION 27 – NM, with assistance from RC, IM and HT to pull together a short scoping document outlining the remit of a task and finish group on marine non-native species.

14. AOB

NM distributed the letter BASC had written to Shooting Times and outlined the reason this was necessary – the worries of the National Gamekeepers Organisation (and others) that the strategy would ban the movement of pheasants into areas of GB where they do not currently exist. The BASC letter (which was written after a conversation to clarify the issue between BASC and NM) served to clarify the issue and to calm the fears of gamekeepers.

NM also distributed copies of the article in Horticulture Week on the *Ludwigia* control project.

15. Date and location of next meeting.

HJT thanked the Scottish Executive for hosting the meeting.

The Secretariat offered to host the next PB at CSL in York at 10.00 on Wednesday 21 November.