

**PROGRAMME BOARD ON NON-NATIVE SPECIES  
TWELFTH MEETING**

**MINUTES**

**FORESTRY COMMISSION, EDINBURGH, 23 MARCH 2009, 11.00**

**1. Attendance / apologies**

*Present*

Stephen Hunter (Defra, Chair)  
Niall Moore (NNSS, Secretary)  
Sallie Bailey (FC)  
Jessa Battersby (JNCC)  
Phil Boon (SNH) – Lunchtime presentation only  
Olaf Booy (NNSS)  
Mark Diamond (EA)  
Ian Hooper (Scottish Government)  
Verity Hunter (NNSS, Minute taker)  
Francis Marlow (Defra) via audio link  
Trevor Perfect (Defra)  
Angela Robinson (Scottish Government)  
William Somerfield (WAG) via audio link  
Huw Thomas (Defra)

*Apologies received from:*

Richard Cowan (Defra) – Trevor Perfect standing in  
Diana Reynolds (WAG) – William Somerfield standing in  
Nicola Spence (CSL)  
Deryck Steer (JNCC) - Jessa Battersby standing in

SH welcomed all to the meeting and explained that he was chairing as FM was unable to attend in person. Everyone around the table introduced themselves. SH informed the meeting that on 1 April CSL will merge with Defra Plant Health Division (PHD) / Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate (PHSI), the Defra Plant Variety Rights Office and Seeds Division (PVS) and the UK Government Decontamination Service (GDS) to form the Food and Environment Research Agency (Fera). Nicola Spence, Fera's new Chief Scientist, will then represent Fera on the Programme Board, replacing SH.

**2. Minutes of 11th meeting on 30 October 2008**

*Paper circulated – PB Mar09-02*

Item 7 Rapid Response – American bullfrog.

HT pointed out that the positive association between the presence of non-native amphibian species and the presence of chytrid fungus may not be as strong (although still present) as previously reported to the Board.

Item 7 Rapid Response – Water primrose.

HT suggested that the wording needs to be altered here too.

The minutes were otherwise agreed.

**ACTION 1** – VH to re-circulate the draft minutes once HT has amended text (as above).

### **3. Actions / matters arising**

*Paper circulated – PB Mar09-03*

Action 5 – NM said that the draft Ministerial report is still in progress.

Action 10 – NM has been investigating the possible impact of the Aquaculture Regulation on the NNRAP. He thought there could potentially be c.100 aquaculture assessments per annum and that the NNRAP would not be able to cope with that number.

TP explained that his team are still working on the Regulation and a meeting with CEFAS is scheduled for this week to help with scoping. No retrospective RAs will be needed, only RAs for novel species. They have been working on Impact Assessments and will inform the Board of the likely volume of RAs required. SH asked whether CEFAS would do the RAs and who would make the final decision. TP replied that the legislation suggests that an Advisory Body is required, which could be CEFAS but it would also need to cover plants possibly with the help of NE or NNSS/NNRAP. They will run a dummy case study on shrimp with a virtual team to help formulate a suitable RA process.

SH said it needs to be clear how everything links together, taking care to ensure consistency across the department in relation to charging regimes. AR asked when a RA would be triggered and how the Devolved Governments would be involved. TP explained that CEFAS would be notified when imports of new aquaculture species are due for England and Wales and they would then begin the RA process at that stage if necessary. Northern Ireland has already drafted a Statutory Instrument and the Scottish Government will need to do the same.

Action 13 – SB asked if the Marine Working Group item links to the Aquaculture Regulation item above. NM said there is a need to address the aquaculture pathway and there is a joint JNCC/NNSS paper in circulation outlining the role of the proposed workshop to scope the need for a marine working group (that the Board, at its last meeting, agreed was needed).

All the other actions had been discharged or would be covered later in the meeting under other items on the agenda.

There were no matters arising.

**ACTION 2** – NM to circulate draft Ministerial report when it is further developed.

**ACTION 3** – TP to circulate the PB with details of the likely volume of RAs required under the Aquaculture Regulation.

**ACTION 4** – NM to report back to the next PB on progress with a possible Marine Working Group.

#### 4. GB Strategy

- **Implementation plan (forward / reverse look)**

*Paper circulated – PB Mar09-04*

OB introduced this item, beginning with the Reverse Look. The items on Rapid Response and Monitoring & Surveillance are both amber but will be dealt with later in the agenda. The item on the research database is also amber to indicate that progress on this has been slow. OB plans to redevelop the database to make submitting information easier and he will target people specifically to encourage contributions.

NM reported that the Wales WG did an action audit and will incorporate this into the database. HT said that submitting information needs to be as easy as possible to avoid deterring people.

Under Building Awareness & Understanding NM said that the Public Attitudes Survey in England is now complete and the final report is due at the end of March. He said that the findings are extremely interesting and will be very useful.

OB then introduced the Forward Look.

Website - NM reported that he is in discussion with Defra and the Cabinet Office as to where the Secretariat website sits under the Transformational

Government programme and he is hoping that the website will maintain an independent existence as it is owned jointly by the three governments and therefore sits outside the remit of the Transformational Government programme. Some items will need to be placed on the DirectGov site. HT and AR both expressed support for this approach and the Board agreed that NM should continue to champion the existence of an independent website for its Secretariat. JB said we would need to understand the implications for a CDR.

OB said that funds are needed to redevelop the website and he is leading discussions with Defra. NM said that Defra Marketing has some funds that may be available once there is more clarification of needs and website status.

#### Risk Assessment

OB reported that the new modified RA scheme should be available soon. This will be in place by the time of the next PB meeting.

Implementation plan – HT said that it is now almost one year from publication of the Strategy and it is an opportune time to review dates specified therein and amend them if necessary.

**ACTION 5** – NM to arrange a presentation at the next PB by the researchers who worked on the Public Attitudes Survey.

**ACTION 6** – HT to organise a review of dates in the Strategy Implementation Plan and report back to the next PB meeting.

## **5. Secretariat Report**

*Paper circulated – PB Mar09-05*

### Website

NM highlighted the continuing increase in the number of hits on the Secretariat website, particularly for October 2008 (which included the BBC's Invasive Species Week). By February 2009 the number of hits had reached almost three times the hits in the same month in 2008.

### Ireland

NM and OB will be attending the All Ireland Steering Group in April and OB will be giving a presentation at the Irish Non-native Species Forum on the following day.

### Overseas territories

NM will be visiting Ascension in May to attend a meeting to help develop a regional strategy for non-native species for the South Atlantic OTs. All his costs are being paid for by the EU-funded project.

### Central Data Repository

NM reported that Defra is funding the development of the CDR for three years and a Steering Group meeting is to be set up shortly.

### ID Sheets

SB queried the lack of contact details on the ID sheets. NM replied that, as the CDR is not yet established, putting contact details for reporting on the sheets was not currently appropriate. Furthermore, many species are not suitable for public reporting but for those that are, contact details will be added once the CDR is established.

## **6. Rapid Response**

*2 Papers circulated – PB Mar09-06A and 6B*

- **Working Group progress**

HT gave an update as Chair of the Rapid Response WG. He said there had been a hiatus in the Group's work with no meetings for five months due to his heavy workload. There has been one meeting, in January 2009, but another is needed before the final report is ready.

- ***Didemnum* – sea squirt in Wales**

NM presented a paper on behalf of CCW. *Didemnum* is invasive in large parts of the world and has a huge impact on biodiversity and the aquaculture industry, particularly mussels. It has been found in Ireland and in two locations in GB in 2008, the most serious outbreak being in Holyhead, north Wales. CCW have commissioned a report which will be finalised by 30 March. SH said he had seen a draft and there seems a good case for action. WS said that there is only a small window of opportunity and queried how long a decision by the Board would take. SH thought that the next PB meeting would almost certainly be too late and suggested circulating the final report rapidly to the PB to canvass views by email.

SH said there are two issues: decide on what action to take based on the report's recommendations and, implementation of this by the relevant authorities.

IH said there needs to be clarity on the role of the PB as opposed to individual administrations. SH pointed out that the PB has no resources and therefore any decision to commit resources has to be made by national authorities.

- **Individual species actions**

1. Water primrose

MD reported that all known sites (with one exception) had been sprayed in 2008. He expects new sites to be discovered this year.

2. American bullfrog

NM said that the situation looks good with few frogs shot last year despite intensive searching. HT reported that Defra / Natural England are funding research to develop a method to detect bullfrog DNA in water.

3. Monk parakeet

HT reported that CSL is researching control methods and shooting seems the most promising. The final report has been submitted but control cannot be progressed as more research is needed on the type of pellets to be used.

4. Oak processionary moth

NM reported that the focus of the infestation is still at Kew. SH pointed out that there may be a technique used by Rentokil that is effective.

5. Topmouth gudgeon

MD reported that work is going as planned but they need to increase the rate at which sites are cleared. SH asked whether this is just an endless management programme or containment only. MD explained that they hope to eradicate on all the source sites.

6. African clawed toad

NM said that WAG is now leading on this. WS explained that the hydrology on the site may be problematic but he will report back on this as soon as possible.

**ACTION 7** – NM to circulate the final report on *Didemnum* to PB as soon as possible for views by email correspondence on what actions to take. Views to be submitted by 6 April, using colleagues to substitute if necessary.

**ACTION 8** – SB and FC colleagues to provide an update on the position regarding Oak processionary moth.

**7. Talk by Phil Boon (SNH) about the Water Framework Directive and how it may link to the GB INNS Strategy**

Phil Boon's talk was well received and SH thanked him on behalf of the PB. SH asked if a copy of the presentation could be circulated and Phil Boon said this would be possible with some editing of the photographs.

HT raised the issue of the ECOSTAT questionnaire that relates to WFD, reporting that some questions were very difficult to answer. Phil Boon said that there is a wide range of opinion both within member States and that the questionnaire was attempting to collate this.

SH said that there may be an EU Invasive (Alien) Species Directive. Phil Boon hoped that there would not be too many contradictions relative to existing legislation. HT worried there was a danger of having too many lists.

**ACTION 9** – Phil Boon to provide NM with an edited copy of his presentation for onward circulation to the PB.

**ACTION 10** – HT to circulate his draft reply to the PB for comment before submission.

## **8. Media and communications**

*Paper circulated – PB Mar09-08*

- **Working Group progress**

AR reported that two meetings of the working group had been held since the last Programme Board meeting but that progress was slower than hoped for. The draft strategy should, however, be available for the PB before its next meeting.

- **International Biodiversity Day**

HT reported that 22 May falls within the purdah period for the local elections in England so Minister's activities would be constrained by this. Local and national stakeholders had shown a lot of interest in the event (particularly the National Trust) and were planning volunteering days, surveys and other events. Defra, Fera and the EA are also planning to have staff involved in action on the ground.

AR reported that in Scotland they would probably focus on rhododendrons and volunteer days will be encouraged. She also reported that RAFTS is planning an event for boat users and anglers. WS informed the Board that for Wales there will be a large event in Snowdonia National Park focussing on rhododendrons as well as events on Himalayan balsam. HT thought that

there needs to be a short core message that groups can expand on as necessary.

JB said that on 20 May there is a JNCC workshop on multilateral environmental agreements including alien species. She will circulate details.

- **Ministerial report**

NM said this is still in progress and he will circulate when it is further advanced (see Action 2 above).

**ACTION 11** – AR and the Media WG to produce a core script for International Biodiversity Day.

## 9. Stakeholder Forum

*Paper circulated – PB Mar09-09*

OB said that the Stakeholder Forum will be held on 12 May in York and the theme will be 'The Strategy one year on'. There may also be a half-day on 13 May devoted to a limited workshop on fora and their interactions with national working groups and the GB Strategy. A draft programme was circulated to the PB.

There was a general feeling that there were too many talks in the morning session and that more discussion time would be useful. This ties in with feedback from the 2008 event. NM said there were differing views on the relative balance between talks and workshop sessions among participants. IH asked if the focus should be public awareness of the issues as this is of most interest to the majority of stakeholders. HT asked if there should be an emphasis on the local-scale perspective, e.g. the Norfolk initiative. NM said that input on surveillance and recording would be very useful as the CDR will be about to be launched.

SH asked if more effort should be put into the posters, perhaps manned by individuals, together with a smaller number of presentations. The international perspective is also important with some upcoming EU initiatives. There could perhaps be two or three key presentations followed by structured workshops and an informal Q&A session. Some of the posters could cover individual Rapid Responses which have been progressed.

## 10. Risk assessment

- **Summary sheets**

OB said that the front page of the summary sheets are now finalised – based on the comments of the Board at its last meeting. The risk management back page needs revising in light of the new module.

- **Update on progress**

OB reported that there are 76 species whose risk assessments are in progress. Ten are complete. Progressing the partially-completed RAs is a key priority for OB in the coming months. He would also keep the website updated. SB asked if the assessors are paid. OB confirmed they were paid and he would push harder for completion of late RAs where necessary.

## 11. Emerging issues

*Paper circulated – PB Mar09-11*

- **Scottish Legislative Review**

AR is leading a Scottish legislative review following a debate in the Scottish Parliament in October 2008. There is a potential Wildlife and the Natural Environment bill in 2010 in which INNS provisions could be included. There has already been discussion with stakeholders and there will be a public consultation in the summer. The Review looks at the recommendations from the 2003 Policy Review, the GB Strategy etc. and covers access to land, control, Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, game management, crime, licensing, etc. AR needs to talk to officials in England and Wales separately for their views.

- **UK Overseas Territories**

HT said there had been a two-day meeting on INNS in the UKOTs in Peterborough the previous week. There were ideas for a bid into an EU fund to integrate policies on OTs with JNCC to lead.

IH queried whether OTs are a matter for this Board. HT thought stakeholders expected the PB to cover this and it is mentioned explicitly in the Strategy. SH said there is a lack of an alternative home for OT invasive species issues which are a key issue for OTs. There will also be a need to inform participants at the May Forum of developments following the issue being

raised at the 2008 Forum. HT said that JNCC had been asked to write a Biodiversity Strategy for the OTs and the PB can feed views into this.

- ***Phytophthora* and Bee Health updates**

SH reported that Defra is now putting £25m over five years into a *Phytophthora* programme aimed at clearing rhododendrons on infected sites. There is also a research programme for England and Wales from April 2009 with a three-year review. This will be operated by Fera. There is an increasing issue with *Vaccinium* infections.

Defra funding for the National Bee Unit is to double for the next two years in order to get a greater presence on the ground to investigate diseases. There will be a review of monitoring and surveillance of threats to pollinators in a five-year programme funded by Defra/Wellcome Trust/BBSRC/NERC/Scottish Government at £2m per year. This will be administered by BBSRC.

- **Internet trade report**

HT summarised the CSL report on the internet pet trade which will go on the NNSS website shortly. SH thought there should be a focus on handling agents, at least for reptiles and mammals as opposed to insects. JB thought there may be an issue of more releases of pets due to the economic climate.

## **12. AOB**

SB circulated copies of the Forestry Commission booklet *Managing and controlling invasive rhododendron*.

TP reminded the PB of the new Westminster Government guidelines on regulatory management and that there is a moratorium on new legislation without close scrutiny of the impacts on business. He said that the crayfish/ILFA legislation may be caught by this. SH said that he has been involved in this initiative and there is increasing pressure to curb legislation. IH said that Scotland also has a deregulation initiative with similar pressures.

HT mentioned Schedule 9 and the sales ban. The analysis of responses is being finalised. There is a need to talk to the trade about possible changes. The RAs will help underpin any legislative change.

HT mentioned a meeting in Brussels on 27 March about the developing EU Invasive Species Strategy and the European early warning system.

## **13. Date and location of future meetings**

The next meeting will be held in York, probably in mid- to late June.

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| <b>ACTION 12</b> – NM to circulate dates for a PB meeting in York around mid- to late June. |
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