

## **PROGRAMME BOARD ON NON-NATIVE SPECIES ELEVENTH MEETING**

### **MINUTES**

**CSL, YORK, 30<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2008, 11.00**

#### **1. Attendance / apologies**

*Present*

Stephen Hunter (Defra, Chair)

Niall Moore (NNSS, Secretary)

Sallie Bailey (FC)

Jessa Battersby (JNCC)

Mark Diamond (EA)

Francis Marlow (Defra)

John Mumford (NNRAP) - Lunchtime presentation and Item 9 only

Diane Owen (NNSS, Minute taker)

Diana Reynolds (WAG) via video link

Charles Stewart-Roper (SG) via tele link

Huw Thomas (Defra)

*Apologies received from:*

Richard Cowan (Defra)

Ian Hooper (SG)

Peter McNabb (HMRC)

Paul Raven (EA) - Mark Diamond standing in

Angela Robinson (SG)

SH welcomed all to the meeting and, for the benefit of those new to the Board, everyone introduced themselves.

## **2. Minutes of meeting on 2 July 2008**

*Paper circulated – PB Oct08-02 Draft Minutes of 10<sup>th</sup> meeting (Jul08)*

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed (with HT to point out two typos to the Secretariat).

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

*Paper circulated – PB Oct08-03 Actions from 10<sup>th</sup> meeting (Jul08)*

All the actions had been discharged or were to be covered later in the meeting under other items on the agenda. The following two were dealt with under this agenda item:

Action 1 – NM informed the Board that, following discussion with officials at Defra and the devolved governments, it was decided that this action was not necessary.

Action 19 – NM informed the Board that this action would be discharged after the Board has given its comments on the summary sheets at this meeting.

There were no matters arising.

## **4. GB Strategy**

*Paper circulated – PB Oct08-04 Strategy Implementation Plan*

HT informed the Board that Defra had gotten internal approval to use a single tendering mechanism to procure the Central Data Repository (CDR). Two peer reviewers have been assigned and it is hoped that the contract will begin

in January 2009. HT has also approved funding for the Botanical Society of the British Isles to collate data on 200 plant species to speed up population of the CDR.

NM tabled examples of the identification (ID) sheets which have been commissioned by Defra and produced by RPS Ecological Consultants. Out of a total of 21 sheets that were commissioned 12 are currently available on the front page of the Secretariat website and the remainder will be added shortly. A further approximately 40 sheets are also in the process of being commissioned by Defra.

The Board welcomed the sheets and agreed that they were useful. DR suggested the need for a Welsh translation for any that are funded by CCW. SH suggested that there needs to be more proactive dissemination than merely displaying them on the Secretariat website. HT suggested displaying them at training and other events while JB suggested that handing out laminated sheets would be useful for practitioners.

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| <p><b>Action 1</b> – <i>NM to display a note on the website pointing out that the ID sheets could be reproduced without copyright issues.</i></p> |
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## **5. Ministerial Report on INNS Activities**

*Paper circulated – PB Oct08-05 Ministerial report Proposal*

NM introduced the paper for decision by the Board. The proposed report would detail action on non-native species that is wider than the Secretariat's activities. The aim would be to report achievements since the establishment of the Programme Board in September 2005 using a short 'glossy' format with many photographs.

The Board agreed that a report in this format and with the suggested content was a good idea and should be progressed in parallel with the production of a suite of events leading up to the CBD International Biodiversity day on May 22, 2009 (whose theme is INNS). SH cautioned that timing needs to be carefully considered to avoid the 3/4 week period of purdah leading up to the European Parliamentary and Local elections.

**Action 2** – *NM/HT to produce a timetable of actions for the publication and launch of the Ministerial Report and for International Biodiversity Day for the next PB meeting.*

**Action 3** – *Secretariat to correct the broken link to the Wales Biodiversity Partnership url.*

**Action 4** – *Secretariat to check the purdah period for the European Parliamentary and Local elections.*

**Action 5** – *NM to produce draft ministerial report for the next PB meeting.*

## **6. Secretariat Report**

*Paper circulated – PB Oct08-06 Secretariat Report*

NM introduced this paper and highlighted that the Secretariat, due to its increasing workload, was in the process of recruiting an extra member of staff. This would raise the staff compliment from the original 2 FTE's to 2.6. It was hoped that, with interviews the following day, the successful candidate would be in post before Christmas.

NM also mentioned the peak of over 4,000 unique visitors to the Secretariat website in October, a result of the BBC week on non-native species. NM also highlighted some of the future work of the Secretariat - in particular input into the All Ireland Steering Group, the baseline survey of public awareness and the photo and video library database that will be available shortly on the website.

JB asked when more risk assessments would be available. NM replied that three more were almost complete and would be circulated shortly. He also pointed out that draft risk assessments could be requested for restricted use once they have been through the NNRAP at least once. JB also asked with whom the Secretariat was engaging in the Overseas Territories (OTs). NM replied that he was a member of the South Atlantic Invasive Species Advisory Group and that he had regular correspondence with Clare Miller and Sarah Sanders of RSPB.

## **7. Rapid Response**

*2 Papers circulated – PB Oct08-07A Rapid Response Working Group and PB Oct08-07B Rapid Response candidates update*

HT updated the Board on progress with the Working Group. There have been four meetings to date and the Working Group has been constructive, engaged and enthusiastic. The report is being progressed but is likely to be delayed until January or February 2009. One of the recommendations is likely to be to retain a small core group, which can be used to approve urgent action. HT also stressed that the working group members were not mandated to sign off the final protocol and that the Board would probably be needed to ensure sign-off with the member organisations. SH highlighted the need for a distinction to be drawn between rapid response and longer-term management. SH added that there will be a need to log who has made decisions throughout any rapid response process.

NM then summarised progress with the six species that the Board decided were priorities for rapid response at its meeting in February. This is outlined below.

Water Primrose – MD reported that spraying had taken place on all known sites in England and Wales in August and September. August was

particularly wet which may have reduced the effectiveness of the herbicide. All sites will need more control next year. HT reminded the Board of Defra's contribution to the control and previous research and agreed that rapid response does not automatically mean a rapid result. SH commented that there needs to be a greater appreciation of the cost savings associated with rapid action. HT replied that European contacts he made at a recent conference could be asked for data on the longer-term management costs incurred which could be used to highlight the cost in comparison to early action in GB.

American Bullfrog – NM reported that the number of adult frogs culled this year (5) was very small compared with 2 years ago (over 100) and that this gave grounds for optimism. He reported that Natural England is hoping to commission some research to detect bullfrog DNA from water samples using PCR. This would allow detection of the frogs at low densities. SH suggested that researchers from the Institute of Zoology (IoZ) speak to staff at CSL about sample preparation for PCR analysis. NM detailed the results of a survey carried out by IoZ which suggested a possible association between the presence of non-native amphibian species (especially Alpine newt) and the presence of chytrid fungus. This was probably not a robust conclusion as yet because the presence of non-native species was not being systematically recorded at all sites where the fungus was found.

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| <p><b>ACTION 6</b> – <i>NM to pass on contact details for Rick Mumford and Charles Lane from CSL to researchers from the Institute of Zoology.</i></p> |
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Monk Parakeets – HT updated the Board on the research investigating potential capture and control methodology for monk parakeets. Trapping has failed to capture any individuals while shooting has resulted in seven individuals being culled. HT also informed the Board that a concerned individual has posted a comment on an internet chat room inviting views. It is not yet clear whether this will escalate into wider media attention.

Oak Processionary Moth – SB informed the Board that control work carried out over the summer had detected fewer larval nests than in 2007 but that control would need to continue for the foreseeable future. SH added that there is now better coordination with the Health Protection Agency in this area.

Topmouth Gudgeon – MD informed the Board that the EA are developing a more strategic programme towards eradication of Topmouth Gudgeon. He also stated that equipment that the EA now have could be used for other species such as the African clawed toad.

African Clawed Toad – NM informed the Board that both WAG and the Secretariat have spoken to the researcher who is studying the Welsh population. He is carrying out a survey of the population over this winter and has agreed to provide the resulting data to CCW, WAG and the Secretariat. NM pointed out that use of Rotonone on the pond known to contain African clawed toad may be a sensible and cost-effective option. JM announced that a recently completed MSc thesis on African clawed toad (for which he was a supervisor) may be useful.

## **8. Talk – John Mumford (Chair of NNRAP) on Progress with Risk Assessments**

JM updated the Board on Progress with the Non-native Risk Analysis Panel (NNRAP) since its establishment in December 2006. The main points of note were:

- 8 risk assessments have been completed;
- 51 risk assessments are being progressed through the mechanism.
- 8 others are about to be commissioned.

The Board welcomed the progress with the Risk analysis Panel. HT mentioned the use of the water hyacinth risk assessment in informing the UK response to a recent proposal on this species by the Bern Convention.

JM also reported on the final development of the methodology, highlighting the increased focus on Risk Management and the development of a unique generic risk management tool. The latest methodological development was carried out in conjunction with EPPO. The Board welcomed the latest developments of the methodology as being a significant step forward. SH stressed how useful transparent risk analyses would be for briefing Ministers. HT queried when the methodology would finally be ready to use. JM replied that this depended on when EPPO finalised it but it was likely to be in December. SH suggested that the new methodology should be widely showcased. NM informed the Board that this was already in hand – he had recently updated the CBD Secretariat on developments in GB, and Richard Baker (CSL) had made a presentation on the new methodology at the Neobiota conference in Prague.

**ACTION 7** – *Secretariat to circulate JM's presentation to the Board.*

## **9. Risk assessment**

*7 Papers circulated - PB Oct08-09A Risk Assessment Methodology update, PB Oct0809B1-6 Draft Risk Assessment Summary Sheets*

NM introduced four versions of risk assessment summary sheets for both the Siberian chipmunk and Chinese mitten crab. The Board discussed the format of the sheets and agreed that the third draft summary sheet format was most suitable but that it needed some modification [including the addition of confidence levels for entry, establishment and spread in the table]. SH suggested that there was a need for an explanatory paragraph to accompany the summary sheets on the website. CSR suggested testing the summary sheets on a non-informed audience and the Board agreed that there should be further consultation [to include the Stakeholder Sounding Board] on the



content of the summary sheets. HT would submit comments after the meeting.

**ACTION 8** – *NM to amend the draft risk assessment summary sheets as agreed.*

**ACTION 9** – *NM to consult Defra Communications on the display of the information in the risk assessment summary sheets and to send to the Stakeholder Sounding Board for comment.*

NM suggested that a small pool of risk managers, mainly from government agencies, could be used to complete the new risk management module. HT queried the additional cost of this to the NNRAP process and the WSC budget for it while SH warned of the dangers inherent in a system where the same group of risk managers were consulted regularly – it could be construed as going to the people who would provide the ‘right’ answer. SH added that there will be a need for public consultation to counteract this impression. The Board agreed that transparency was vitally important and a public ‘consultation’ process was necessary via display on the Secretariat website.

NM also introduced the suggestion by Gordon Copp (member of the NNRAP) that the NNRAP could peer review risk assessments that are needed to underpin the new Aquaculture Regulation. SH commented that, as there is already a process in place, the NNRAP could be used but that more information is needed particularly on how much resource this would require. DR asked if the NNRAP would be acting for Wales. NM responded that the NNRAP covers all of GB but that risk assessments for the Aquaculture Regulation could cover the entire British Isles.

NM reported that there were still a large number of risk assessments on the list of recommendations that had yet to be commissioned. He called for continued feedback on priorities for this list as well as suggestions for further species to risk assess.

**ACTION 10** – *NM to scope what is specifically being asked of the NNRAP re. risk assessments for the Aquaculture Regulation and to report back to the PB.*

**ACTION 11** – *NM to circulate the list of species suggested for risk assessment.*

**ACTION 12** – *All to comment on/prioritise the list of species suggested for risk assessment.*

## **10. Marine Task and Finish Group**

*Paper circulated - PB Oct08-10 Marine Working Group*

NM introduced the paper that had been jointly produced by JNCC and the Secretariat. There followed considerable discussion particularly on how the remit of this proposed group would overlap with existing regulations and codes of practice that are being developed. The Board agreed that there may be merit in establishing a small, focussed group. HT suggested that before agreeing to ToRs specifying what outputs should be produced, it would be sensible to explore the potential remit of such a group with key stakeholders and identify what outputs would be valuable. The Board instructed the Secretariat (jointly with JNCC) to convene a workshop of interested parties to assess the need for a Marine Working Group.

**ACTION 13** – *NM and JB to convene a workshop of key marine stakeholders to assess the need for a marine Working Group and explore possible terms of reference, composition, outputs etc. and report back to the Board.*

## **11. Media and Communications**

*Paper circulated – PB Oct08-11 Media and Comms. Working Group update*

NM introduced the paper and asked the Board for a decision on whether the Media and Communications Strategy should be two separate documents [one for key stakeholders and one for the general public] or a single strategy document. Despite the suggestion from some at the last (MCWG) meeting that two separate strategies would be needed, the Board agreed that there should only be one strategy document but that such a document could be in two distinct parts if that would better structure its content. NM then informed the Board that the Media and Communications Strategy would be delayed until February 2009 due to necessity of including the output of the England Public Awareness Baseline Survey [not expected until late January].

**ACTION 14** – *All to inform NM and AR of media opportunities in the short term.*

## 12. Emerging issues

### *Paper PB Oct08-12 Invertebrate Import Licensing*

NM updated the Board on the recent meeting to discuss the licencing arrangements for invertebrate imports. The next step forward is for Angela Taylor (Defra) to produce a flow diagram of the procedures to use when dealing with queries.

SH updated the Board on progress with discussions on responsibilities for non-native species issues in the Overseas Territories (OTs). SH commented that RSPB, OTEP and the Darwin Initiative all funded work which is currently tackling non-native species problems in the OTs. He informed the Board that Defra and the FCO are still in discussions on a range of issues relating to the OTs. The next stage is for SH to talk to Martin Brasher (Defra) about the issues and that he and FM would pursue this further.

### 13.AOB

JB informed the Board that Gabrielle Wyn from CCW had reported the presence of a Sea squirt (*Didemnum* sp) in several places in Holyhead Harbour. This species (if confirmed to be *D. vexillum*) is the first record for GB [it is already present in Ireland]. NM informed the Board that the (draft) risk assessment for this species assessed it to be high risk. The Board discussed the issue and decided that a rapid response should be scoped. This could be an opportunity to partially test the emerging rapid response mechanism. The risk management module should be completed and CCW should refine the costs (for survey as well as potential eradication).

**ACTION 15** – *DR and HT to discuss resourcing issues for the Didemnid incursion.*

**ACTION 16** – *NM to initiate the Rapid Response mechanism and report back to the Board on progress.*

JB also raised the issue of whether the countryside agencies had enough 'buy-in' or engagement with the Board and suggested (on behalf of the country agencies) that there was a case for them becoming members of the Board. The Board discussed the issue and expressed concern that the addition of three more members would make decision-taking more difficult and reiterated that the country agencies can have input through both JNCC and their sponsoring departments/governments, who all sit on the Board.

### 14. Date and location of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held in January or February 2009 in Cardiff or Edinburgh, potential dates to be circulated.