

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

MINUTES

**DEFRA, ROOM 1/04, TEMPLE QUAY, BRISTOL
Tuesday 22 March 2011, 11.00**

1. Attendance/apologies

Present:

Francis Marlow (Chair, Defra)
Huw Thomas (Chair, Defra)
Niall Moore (NNS, Secretary)
Sallie Bailey (FC) – by telecon
Olaf Booy (NNS)
Robert Griffiths (WAG) – by telecon
Verity Hunter (NNS, Minute taker)
Stephen Jackson (WAG) – by telecon
Ron Macdonald (SNH) – by telecon
Simon Mackown (Defra)
Ant Maddock (JNCC)
Mike McCabe (CCW)
Pete Robertson (Fera)
Angela Robinson (SG)
Richard Saunders (NE) – by telecon

Apologies received from:

Susan Davies (SNH) – replaced by Ron Macdonald
Mark Diamond (EA)
Ian Hooper (SG)
Trevor Perfect (Defra)
Paul Raven (EA)
Diana Reynolds (WAG) – replaced by Stephen Jackson and Robert Griffiths
Gavin Ross (Defra)
Gabe Wyn (CCW) - replaced by Mike McCabe

FM explained that he would only be able to chair the meeting until the lunch break and then HT would take over the chair for the afternoon session.

2. Minutes of 16th Meeting on 11 October 2010

Paper circulated PB Mar11-02

HT had an amendment under Item 7 Rapid Response – Individual species actions. He said that *Dikerogammarus* and Eagle Owl should be added to the updated list of rapid response species rather than the list for contingency plans. The Minutes of the 16th Meeting were then agreed.

3. Actions/matters arising

Paper circulated PB Mar11-03

Action 1 – NM reported that work on the country working group prioritisation exercises is ongoing. Scotland has made most progress – carry over.

Action 3 – NM said that he is still consulting on the prioritisation of rapid response species and will draft a paper for the next PB meeting – carry over.

Action 7 – HT reported that the consultants' report on the EU Strategy was extremely long. He had therefore drawn the attention of the relevant GB policy contacts to its broad thrust and circulated a web link to the report. Additionally, they have been kept informed of key developments regarding the Commission Working Groups.

Action 12 – NM said that it will take some time to prepare a paper for the PB summarising figures on volunteer effort – carry over.

All other actions had been discharged and there were no matters arising.

ACTION 1 (previous Action 1) – NM to report back the results of the Country working group prioritisation exercises to the Programme Board at the next meeting.

ACTION 2 (previous Action 3) – NM to draft a paper for the next Programme Board on the prioritisation of rapid response species.

ACTION 3 (previous Action 12) – NM to continue to collate figures on volunteer effort.

4. GB Strategy

Paper circulated PB Mar11-04

- Implementation plan (forward/reverse look)

OB introduced Paper 4, beginning with the Reverse Look and highlighted the Key Actions that were on amber. On 6.2 he said there will be a 'soft' launch of the NNSIP (the Species Information Portal) in early April on the NNS website.

On Key Actions 6.4 and 6.5 he reported that work on Pathway Action Plans is continuing.

On Key Action 6.7 he reported that the Killer Shrimp implementation plan is progressing and other species plans are ongoing.

RM asked whether there were target dates for the production of ISAPs for the remaining species that the Board had agreed were priorities. NM said that work on the crayfish ISAP is ongoing and that most of the rest are partially drafted but stakeholder consensus can be difficult to obtain. OB said that it would be possible to produce basic drafts for the next PB meeting.

OB then introduced the Forward Look.

Under 6.1 HT highlighted the new *Check, Clean, Dry* campaign being launched on Monday 28 March with the Defra Minister and key stakeholders.

Under 6.8 he said that the new streamlined version of the Horticultural Code of Practice is almost ready for approval by the Minister.

5. Secretariat Report

Paper circulated PB Mar11-05

NM introduced the Secretariat Report and highlighted the following issues.

LAG Workshop

HT strongly endorsed the work being done with local groups and said that the networking opportunities of the LAG workshop were invaluable. He also stressed how well these initiatives fit in with the UK Government's Big Society agenda.

RAFTS Biosecurity Planning Project

NM explained that the approach being taken in Scotland by RAFTS is being trialled in England. There is also a Biosecurity Planning Conference on 7 June in London to discuss extending this approach across catchments in England and Wales.

Website Summary

NM said that the trend in the number of unique visitors to the site which had been climbing steadily since the 2007 launch was now starting to plateau. OB noted that when the NNSIP is available after April the number of new visitors, especially among the general public, will hopefully increase.

PR asked if it would be possible to provide more information on individual hits and where they are occurring and OB explained that this is currently technically difficult. OB suggested that a priority for the website would be to improve the web stats so it is clearer who is using what pages and look at methods for increasing its profile (e.g.

through web optimization, increasing Google profile, etc) so that people are more aware of and can more easily find the resources / tools available.

AM said it would be useful if all the links to pages on one species could be accessed from the first hit and OB said that this would start to happen with the new Portal. AM also said that JNCC would be keen to have the list of all 3800 species on the NBN.

Future Work Programme

HT asked about the EPPO invasive plant prioritization meeting in Paris attended by NM who said it had been useful to frame his EU Strategy paper on risk assessment.

OB noted that there was only one complete ISAP on the website and asked whether the priority for new ISAPs should be refined. The Board requested that drafts of all of the previously listed species be provided for the next meeting.

OB asked whether a priority list of the species not yet here should be drawn up for contingency planning. He said that only about 10-20 species would be needed.

ACTION 4 – NM to circulate information to the PB about the RAFTS Biosecurity Planning Conference on 7 June.

ACTION 5 – OB to draw up a list of species for prioritisation for contingency plans for the next PB meeting.

ACTION 6 – OB to provide first draft (with input from appropriate stakeholders) Invasive Species Action Plans for priority species by the next Programme Board meeting

6. EU Strategy development

Paper circulated PB Mar11-06

HT reported that the pace is increasing on the development of the EU Strategy. There are three working groups, each divided into several tasks. NM is leading the task on risk assessment while HT is leading on rapid response. PR will be involved in the group on long-term management and control. OB reported that Helen Roy is leading a task on databases.

NM said that his group is finding the listing approach contentious, particularly with regards to the pet industry which opposes a white list approach for import and keeping.

FM said that UK experience should be used to ensure realistic approaches to tasks. HT said a Ministerial submission will try to get a UK steer and AR said Scotland needs to do the same. NM said we had organised a 'stakeholders' meeting on 15 April in London to offer stakeholders a dialogue on this the EU Strategy process and maintain our inclusive approach. HT said the working groups should finish by the

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end of June with 14 papers being delivered to the Commission. Discussions and the development of an impact assessment will then take place within the EU during the rest of the year.

7. Risk analysis issues

Paper circulated PB Mar11-07

OB summarized the issues surrounding the large number of risk assessments still to be completed and the limited capacity within the current risk assessment system. He asked how NNSS should prioritise risk assessments to be completed and whether there was a need for a different approach in some cases.

The Board agreed that:

- The NNSS should develop criteria to help determine the priority given to undertaking risk assessments. This would be reviewed by the Board at the next meeting.
- Criteria should include the needs of regulation / legislation.
- Policy leads should be involved in helping to determine the priorities.
- The purpose of the risk assessment should always be made clear from the outset.
- The NNSS should develop a rapid risk assessment process which could be used for all species unless there was a clear need for a more detailed assessment.
- HT noted that well-established species in particular could be rapidly risk assessed instead of having detailed assessments. He suggested that candidate species for significant control projects, especially rapid response, were likely to be a top priority, possibly followed by those being considered for any regulatory measures and then those that are established but nevertheless, subject to general management effort by others.

The PB considered that rotating the Chair had its benefits but also that at this time, if the NNRAP and Secretariat were content that all was working well, there was no particular need to precipitate a change.

OB asked the PB for its opinion on whether RAs should be anonymous. At present some are anonymous, some are not, so there is a lack of consistency. RS raised the point of Freedom of Information requests for assessors' names which would almost certainly be granted. HT thought the only exemption might be if the assessor's personal safety were at risk. RM and SJ agreed there should be a presumption of transparency. SM said that previous and current assessors must be notified that they might lose anonymity and HT said it would be useful to look at how FOI/Data Protection provisions may be relevant, particularly for highly contentious species so that we are fore-armed in the event of any issues arising.

ACTION 7 – OB to develop criteria and suggest initial priorities for future risk assessment.

ACTION 8 – ALL to assist in providing a steer on what risk assessments to prioritize.

ACTION 9 – OB to draft a rapid risk assessment methodology that would be used where detailed assessment is not required.

ACTION 10 – NNSS to alert risk assessors to the altered policy on naming them and in future to presume that risk assessors will be named for all risk assessments.

ACTION 11 – NNSS to investigate the potential impact of FOI/data protection legislation on naming of risk assessors.

8. Rapid Responses

- MoU

HT said that 10 out of the 15 relevant organisations have now signed the MOU – some of those outstanding were said to be in progress while there were new developments in Scotland which could have an affect on the framework envisaged by the working group. AR said that the Code of Practice (that is supporting the WANE Act) will provide a framework of responsibility for the Scottish agencies with SNH as overall coordinator. New emergency powers will be available under the Act for rapid responses.

- *Dikerogammarus*
Papers circulated PB Mar11-08A i, ii

In the absence of EA representation, HT summarised the response to *Dikerogammarus* covered in the joint paper with the EA. He said that in the spirit of the Rapid Response report and MoU, the EA had taken on the coordinating role for the species and there had been significant pressures and challenges on both the EA and NE. Stakeholders are being involved in the process. Following an assessment of options the task group will seek to map the next steps and produce a business case to support them. Ministers have approved an initial plan for action. The scope for eradicating *Dikerogammarus* is still to be looked into but the priorities to date have clearly been to implement containment and bio-security and to assess the possible extent of the problem.

OB asked about the Scottish role and AR said they need to be involved in the process at least as corresponding members. RM suggested that SEPA should be involved. NM said it may be useful to use a meeting of the Rapid Response WG to discuss lessons learned. The PB was content with this.

PR mentioned the Fera project with the Plant Health diagnostics team to develop a field diagnostic test which could potentially detect *Dikerogammarus* DNA in samples of sediment, water or fish guts.

ACTION 12 – HT to invite a Scottish representative onto the *Dikerogammarus* task group.

ACTION 13 – HT to organize a meeting of the rapid response working group to look at lessons learned from *Didemnum* and *Dikerogammarus* as well as how other changes will impact on the rapid response framework.

- *Didemnum*
Paper circulated PB Mar11-08B i,ii

OB summarized the approaches being taken in England, Scotland and Wales:

- England – unlikely to be able to eradicate all populations so focus on containment and limiting the risk of spread; but maintain the ability to eradicate small, high risk populations where they might threaten specific areas (e.g. SSSIs).
- Scotland – carry out a cost-benefit assessment of eradication and determine whether rapid response should be carried out on this basis.
- Wales – continue with eradication over winter 2011 to 2012.

The Programme Board agreed that the approaches being taken in each country appeared the most sensible.

AM asked about the funding position for the future and MM also flagged up possible staff shortages at CCW which may hinder the work.

OB noted that a common theme for all countries was the importance of reducing the risk of spread and re-introduction from abroad and asked whether the PB supported the recommendations made by the GB Working Group on *D. vexillum* on this subject. The PB said they were very appreciative of the thorough and very informative report and supported its recommendations. It expressed its thanks for the hard work of the Working Group. OB outlined the suggestion of the Working Group to take forward the recommendations of the report by developing a LIFE+ project on marine non-native species pathway management.

AM stressed the importance of communications and said the Be Plant Wise campaign has shown the benefits of stakeholder engagement but asked if we should be using more professionals for future campaigns. RM supported a LIFE+ bid but highlighted the need for a lead partner to be identified. OB explained that a full proposal had to be submitted by mid-July, a very tight timescale, and Cefas might possibly take the lead. NM asked about INTERREG funding. OB said a teleconference was being held to discuss funding and partnerships. The Board supported the approaches suggested, including the possibility of making a LIFE+ bid

which would need to be fleshed out in more detail, but it was also clear that at this stage, none of the bodies represented could make firm commitments regarding the issue of co-funding a bid.

ACTION 14 – NNSS to relay thanks and comments of support from the PB to the Working Group for *D. vexillum*.

ACTION 15 – NNSS to keep the PB informed of progress with *D. vexillum* work and the development of a LIFE+ project.

9. Talk – Simon Mackown on Crayfish ISAP

HT thanked SM for his very informative presentation.

10. Asian Hornet

Paper circulated PB Mar11-10

NM introduced the paper and asked the Board for comments on the proposed plan of action. He reported that a Risk Assessment had been commissioned by the Secretariat (by the National Bee Unit (NBU)) and this was being fast-tracked. The expected outcome is that it will be a Medium risk. AR agreed with the proposed plan of action and said she would consult with colleagues. RS thought it should be made clear that this species is not the Asian Giant Hornet. RM asked what lessons could be learned from France with this species and NM said the NBU is talking to French and Swiss experts. HT asked what about the impacts in France and NM said that, as well as the impacts on honey bees and probably other invertebrates, there are possible human health impacts. HT thought we need some prepared lines and realistic objectives for any action if the species does arrive in GB, and asked whether we need a link on the website for sightings as per the Harlequin Ladybird.

11. Stakeholder Forum 2011

NM summarised the proposed venue and programme for the Eighth Forum and asked for comments. It will be in the John McIntyre Centre at the University of Edinburgh on 18 May. VH had visited the venue and thought it excellent with suitable rooms and helpful staff. Transport links are also good and there is some on-site accommodation if required. An initial email notifying the date had been sent out to stakeholders on 22 February and a follow-up with programme and registration form would be sent once details had been finalised.

There was some discussion around the proposed programme for the event and NM said he would circulate a revised draft for comment.

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ACTION 16 – NM to circulate the revised draft Stakeholder Forum programme to the PB for comment by 1 April.

12. Volunteering

NM reported that he is currently collating information on volunteer effort, especially species control, and may be able to present a paper to the next PB meeting (see Item 3 above). HT said this would be useful to fit in with current Government themes, e.g. the Big Society. RM said that SNH is holding its first Good Practice Workshop for volunteer groups. He would circulate details and asked that the information go on the Secretariat website.

ACTION 17 – RM to circulate details of the SNH Good Practice Workshop for volunteer groups. OB to place on Secretariat website.

13. AOB

Monk Parakeet

NM reported that the trapping programme by Fera staff is progressing well. From a population of approx. 100, 14 birds have already been captured live and live trapping (and possibly shooting) will continue. RS commented that more legislative powers are needed especially for access. NM said public reaction had been muted and the exercise was working well in private gardens so far.

Ruddy Duck

NM reported that the estimated population is now 80-85 birds for the UK (from a starting population of 6,000) and Defra funding has been obtained to continue work for the next financial year.

American Lobster

NM reported that this species has shown a dramatic increase in records from GB in the last year with over 40 animals caught. There are disease risks and the Shellfish Association of GB is concerned. Cefas is working on this species to estimate numbers of imported individuals and disease risks. NNSS is to produce an ID sheet and poster for SAGB to distribute with the message that storing these animals live in open water is not advised.

HT (as Acting Chair) informed the meeting that this was AR's last Programme Board as she is moving to another post (in aquaculture planning) within the Scottish Government. He thanked her for her commitment, enthusiasm and support over the past few years as we have moved from a policy review to having a GB Strategy and all that we have been doing since its launch. He also highlighted the achievement of the Scottish WANE Bill provisions on INNS which she had been instrumental in steering through. The meeting added its heartfelt thanks and good wishes.

14. Date and location of future meetings

PR offered to host the next PB meeting at Fera, Sand Hutton, York. Dates would be circulated but it would probably be June or July.

ACTION 18 – VH to circulate dates for the next PB meeting at Fera, Sand Hutton, York in June or July.