

1ST PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING ON NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Minutes

11am, 12 September 2005,
Ground Floor Conference Room, Temple Quay House, Bristol

Attendees

Duncan Isles, SEERAD	Mike Roberts, CSL
Angela Robinson, SEERAD	Linda Smith, EWD, Defra
Richard Cowan, FISH II, Defra	Chris Bear, EWD, Defra
Steve Hunter, PHD, Defra	Peter Starling, HMRC
Steve Ashby, PHD, Defra	Mike Dunn, WAG
Ian McLean, JNCC	Nigel Dotchin, DfT
Deryck Steer, JNCC	Tom Cadman, EWD, Defra (Secretary)
Peter Robertson, CSL	Hilary Thompson, EWD, Defra (Chair)

Apologies

Jane Dalglish, SEERAD
Mark Fuchter, HMRC
Bob Davidson, DOENI

Agenda Item 2: Operation of the Programme Board

(i) Membership, role and function, including terms of reference and links with internal and external stakeholders (Paper 2/1/05)

Aims and objectives:

1. The Board discussed the need to identify a direction and to whom it would be accountable.
 - There is a need for tangible outputs.
 - Programme boards normally have an end goal; to avoid this one becoming a “talking shop” the Board needs a specific direction.
 - Board members have individual Ministerial objectives and national and international obligations through different conventions, so there is a need to identify a top level framework.
 - Because of already existing legislative drivers, and the absence of a statutory status, the Board could not specifically direct others to take specific actions, but could advise and assist in providing a steer.

- The Board should act as an overall strategic directing force for non-native species issues, including providing a mechanism for identifying and prioritising gaps in available guidance and research.
- Some low level or initial research could be undertaken by the Secretariat.
- Ultimately the Board would be accountable to Ministers and would need to ensure buy in from all relevant Ministers through joined up/consistent messages.
- All sectors of industry should provide an input into the development of an Education and Public Awareness strategy.

2. In the context of these discussions and those comments made specifically on the objectives identified in Paper 2/1/05, EWD agreed to redraft and circulate them.

Membership and Working Groups

3. The Board discussed its membership and identified some potential working groups that could be established.

- The Board needs to remain small and focused, although its membership should evolve over time.
- Some felt industry should be represented on the Board, but it was agreed industry might best have an input through its own working group.
- The Board needs an element of restriction/confidentiality, although there may be attendance as observers by working group chairs where agendas include items of relevance to them.
- The Chair should, at least at first, be a senior officer with clear responsibilities to Ministers and who “owns” this area of work. Brian Harding was suggested as the most appropriate choice.
- Working groups suggested:
 - Education and Public Awareness
 - Research and Development
 - Science/Risk Assessment
 - Surveillance
 - Implementation/Control
 - Scottish Group

4. EWD agreed to draft a hierarchical chart/route map identifying how working groups would take proposals forward.

(ii) Establishing the Secretariat (Paper 3/1/05)

5. EWD agreed to re-draft the job specifications for the posts in the Secretariat following the discussions of the Board, bearing in mind that a large proportion of the work would be to support the working groups.

Secretary:

- experience of science/policy interface.
- thinking (beyond the obvious) as well as organisational skills.
- ability to deal with a range of partners.
- knowledge of departmental/government working.

H-level:

- one to be scientific, with experience of non-native species issues.
- one to have good IT skills.

6. The Board agreed that we wanted the “best person for the job” so advertising should be done internally and externally at the same time. If an internal candidate was chosen, appointment on secondment should be considered. The post should be offered as a 3 year fixed-term contract.

7. Defra reported that it was hopeful of knowing the funding position by the beginning of October. However, it was felt that Ministerial commitment was required before posts were advertised and EWD agreed to take this forward.

Agenda Item 3: Developing a National Strategy on Invasive Non-native Species (Paper 7/1/05)

8. It was decided a working group should be set up to take forward the development of a national strategy. The strategy would need to be signed off by the Board. The working group to include:

- HMRC
- JNCC (on behalf of conservation agencies)
- a fish representative from FISH (Defra), CEFAS or EA
- Scottish Executive
- Welsh Assembly Government
- PHD (Defra)
- DfT
- IAH (Defra)
- GWD (Defra)
- CSL
- EWD (Defra) as chair
- a representative with a scientific/academic background (ask Howard Dalton, ScD, Defra for nominees).

9. A number of issues were raised that the working group would need to consider in producing the national strategy:

- including in the strategy an audit of responsibilities;
- taking forward the further development of the risk assessment;
- understanding the interface with animal disease;
- demarcating any overlap with the work of ACRE;
- including horizon scanning for potential new introductions (principles for checking for the them and processes of addressing them);
- clarifying the links to other strategies; and,
- what should be done with the strategy once produced (ie. publication).

10. EWD agreed to formulate terms for the working group.

Agenda Item 4: Education and Public Awareness: developing a strategy (including preparation for the third Annual Forum) (Paper 4/1/05)

11. This paper was welcomed and seen as an important aspect of the co-ordinating mechanism's work however, it was felt this could not be progressed further until a national strategy on non-native species had been established.

12. Annual Forum: the Board agreed that there needed to be demonstrable progress to report to the Forum, such as a national strategy, a second code of practice, etc. To allow the Board, Secretariat and relevant working groups time to make sufficient progress to be able to report on this basis, it was decided the next Forum should be postponed until April/May 2006.

13. It was questioned whether the London Wetland Centre was capable of accommodating 160 delegates for the next Forum. EWD agreed to check this and the availability of break-out rooms.

14. Code of Practice: the proposal for the next Code to be for the pet trade was welcomed. The Board noted that legislation relating to fish in England and Wales is different, and suggested this aspect could be left out of the Code for the current time.

15. Stakeholder Working Group: this should be established at the earliest opportunity, and before the next Forum took place to ensure stakeholders feel they are being involved and it could have an input to the agenda. Board members were asked to nominate, by the end of October, suitable stakeholders for membership of the working group along with a short explanation of the contribution they believed their nominee could make.

Agenda Item 5: Research on Non-native Species: BRAG and beyond (Paper 5/1/05)

16. This paper was circulated for information. It was suggested the Secretariat could be a focus for taking forward, or co-ordinating, research. However, it was agreed that before this was reviewed further, the Board needed to agree a national strategy for non-native species.

17. The Board discussed how best to take forward the risk assessment methodology. The Scottish Executive confirmed it had some money for a peer review and agreed to lead an ad hoc working group (also comprising CSL and CEFAS). A paper will be prepared for the January meeting.

18. FISH II confirmed that the Plant Health risk assessment was currently being adapted for fish and they would keep the Board updated on this.

19. An additional paper on the Social Science aspects of non-native species was introduced. The Board agreed this was an important issue and that public and social awareness needed building into non-native species work. There could be links to the RELU (Rural Economics and Land Use) programme, which includes assessing public perception of impacts.

20. PHD mentioned they would be attending a horticultural seminar at Reading University and that they would be putting across Defra's position on non-native species. PHD agreed to circulate details of the seminar to Board members.

Agenda Item 6: Update on issues of current interest (Paper 6/1/05)

21. The Board considered the paper would be a useful addition to the website once it is established and that later updates could include ideas in the pipeline.

22. Board members were asked to ensure contributions on additional items were provided to EWD before the paper is re-circulated.

Agenda Item 7: Date, Programme and venue of next meeting(s)

23. Next meetings agreed for:

- early January - London
- April - perhaps in Edinburgh.
- July – perhaps in York
- October – perhaps in Cardiff

24. Possible dates to be circulated as soon as possible depending on the Chair's diary.

25. One item suggested for the agenda at the January meeting was "representative role".

25. It was also agreed that Board papers needed to be circulated as early as possible (at least two weeks) in advance of a meeting so that members would have sufficient time to obtain comments from those they represented and formulate a line to bring to meetings.

Agenda Item 8: Any Other Business

27. No further issues were raised under AOB.

List of Action Points

- EWD to redraft and circulate the aims and objectives of the Programme Board.
- EWD to draft a hierarchical chart identifying the process by which working groups would take forward proposals.
- EWD to redraft the job specifications for the Secretariat.
- EWD to clarify funding for the Secretariat posts and seek Ministerial commitment.
- CSL to advertise, both internally and externally, for Secretariat posts as soon as funding issues are concluded.
- EWD to draft terms of reference for the National Strategy working group.
- Board members to provide suggestions for stakeholder membership of the Education and Public Awareness working group, along with details of what nominees can contribute, by the end of October.
- EWD to re-check ability of London Wetlands Centre to accommodate 160 delegates and provide break-out rooms.
- EWD to establish a working group to take forward a Pet Trade Code of Practice.
- Scottish Executive to lead an ad-hoc working group to peer review the risk assessment tool and provide a paper for the next meeting of the Board.
- FISH II to keep the Board up to date with progress on its development of a risk assessment based on the Plant Health model.
- PHD to circulate to Board members details of the Horticultural seminar it will be attending at Reading University.
- Board members to provide suitable contributions to the "Update" paper (6/1/05).
- EWD to circulate possible dates for the next year's meetings based on the Chair's diary commitments.