

2ND PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING ON NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Minutes

10:30am, 19 April 2006,
Royal Scots Club, Edinburgh

Agenda Item 1: Introductions and apologies

Attendees

Judith Young, SEERAD	Steve Hunter, PHD, Defra
Angela Robinson, SEERAD	Mike Dunn, WAG
Joanna Young, SEERAD	Ian McLean, JNCC
Huw Thomas, WSC, Defra	Tom Cadman, WSC, Defra (Secretary)
Niall Moore, Secretariat	Richard Cowan, ASFFW, Defra
Mike Roberts, CSL	
Hilary Thompson, WSC, Defra (Chair)	

Apologies

Peter Starling, HMRC
Nigel Dotchin, DfT

1. Members explained some of the organisational changes that had taken place in their respective departments, including that John Robbs had taken over as Director of Wildlife, Countryside and Land Use in Defra and would be approached as the future Chair for the Programme Board. Defra and SEERAD would provide updated organograms for circulation to Board members.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes of the previous meeting (including action points)

2. Action points not picked up on the agenda:
- *EWD to redraft the job specifications for the Secretariat* – it was noted that these had been redrafted and the Grade 7 post advertised and filled by Niall Moore. The administrative HEO post was soon to be advertised and the Board asked for the job description to be circulated to Members.
 - *CSL to advertise, both internally and externally, for the Secretariat posts as soon as funding issues are concluded* – completed for the Grade 7 post and the administrative HEO post to be advertised shortly.
 - *EWD to re-check ability of London Wetlands Centre to accommodate 160 delegates and provide break-out rooms* – it was confirmed that the LWC could accommodate 150 delegates (bearing in mind previous forums had averaged 90 delegates) and that there should be sufficient capability for four break-out rooms. This venue has now been booked for 24 May.

- *FISH II (now ASFFW) to keep the Board up to date with progress on its development of a risk assessment based on the plant health model – this action was carried forward as ASFFW had not had the opportunity or resources to take this forward.*
 - *PHD to circulate to Board members details of the horticultural seminar it will be attending at Reading University – this seminar was organised by RHS and took place in October/November 2005. It included discussions from various viewpoints on bringing plants into the UK and their potential for invasion. The main conclusion was that a working group should be established to look at the issues and make recommendations, with Nicola Spence being the Defra representative. As soon as they are available, terms of reference and proposed membership for this group would be provided to Niall Moore for circulation to the Board.*
 - *Board members to provide suitable contributions to the “Update” paper (6/1/05) – no contributions were provided to date, although Defra had updated the paper as far as possible. This remains an ongoing action.*
 - *EWD to circulate possible dates for the next year’s meetings based on the Chair’s diary commitments – dates of 19 July and 25 October had been agreed prior to the meeting. The Secretary had booked a meeting venue at CSL’s York offices for October and Mike Dunn agreed to investigate a venue in Wales for July.*
3. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Agenda Item 3: Operation of the Programme Board

(i) Aims and objectives (paper 2/1/05 (rev 1))

4. It was noted that the Strategy was now to be referred to as “GB” rather than “national” and that this should be reflected in the two references to it in the aims and objectives of the Board, as well as being updated in any other papers. The Board agreed the re-circulated paper (2/1/05 (Rev 1)).

(ii) Working group processes (paper 2/2/06)

5. The Board considered the paper (2/2/06) and noted that there appeared to be a large number of proposed working groups. It was agreed that several (Research and Development, Science/Risk Assessment and Surveillance) could be subsumed into one group (Science and Surveillance), although a separate risk assessment advisory panel is also probably necessary.

6. The Scottish Executive explained that their working group is not a duplication of the Programme Board or its working groups, but has more of a policy outlook within its national framework (although delivery organisations are represented on the group). The Welsh Assembly Government confirmed they did not anticipate establishing a similar group for Wales.

7. The Board discussed how the working groups might interact and the role of the Secretariat in that interaction, both in the business as usual situation and if there was an emergency. Key points made included:

- the interaction between working groups needed revisiting, placing the Secretariat at the centre and spider-webbing out to different levels of importance or ongoing work.
- there is existing work that a Science and Surveillance group could identify and begin to assess for the purposes it is likely to fulfil for the Programme Board.
- English Nature (or its new incarnation, Natural England) should be brought into the mechanism as soon as possible.
- the audit of responsibilities would offer a lot of assistance in formulating the Strategy, as well as directing where the work of the Programme Board would be best targeted. As a result the audit should be taken forward as soon as possible.
- there is a need to identify processes and triggers for emergency responses, as well as how it would work across the administrations (including the island of Ireland), officials and ministers - perhaps establishing an emergency group, or at least a list of relevant contacts for different sectors so that implementation responsibility can be identified as quickly as possible.
- it was anticipated that working groups might have a more intelligence gathering role to start with, progressing to a coordinating and linking role, but not directing and implementation, which should already be in place in the relevant sectors.

Agenda Item 4: Secretariat

(i) Funding and ministerial commitment

8. Defra confirmed funding and commitment was in place for the Secretary (now in post) and the administrative HEO post. A strong business case now needs to be put forward for recruitment of an AO, with a job description to be circulated to the Board. The need for the technical HEO post is less immediate, especially given the Secretary's experience – this will be reviewed later in the year.

9. It was agreed that the Secretary needed to investigate what funding (other than for Secretariat staff) might be available and what it could be used for. There was a suggestion that perhaps biodiversity related funding could be more effectively directed towards non-native species work, given the increasing awareness of non-native species and their impact on biodiversity.

(ii) Progress on recruitment (paper 3/2/06)

10. It was noted that the paper attached to this agenda item had been overtaken by events, ie. the recruitment of the Secretary and forthcoming advertisement for the administrative HEO post.

11. As an aside, it was noted that an appropriate route to access the Secretariat needs to be established by inclusion on staff directories and establishment of a website, on which the Secretary will need to liaise with the relevant communications and press offices.

Agenda Item 5: Establishment of the National Strategy working group, including terms of reference (papers 7/1/05 and un-numbered)

12. The working group met for the first time on 23 March, where it agreed it would be more appropriate to be referred to as the GB Strategy Working Group. A note of that meeting was circulated as a paper for this Programme Board meeting. It set out the revised membership and terms of reference for the group which the Board agreed subject to the following points:

- the SAC that advises Howard Dalton was suggested as the initial contact for an invitee to be the scientific/education representative, with the Welsh Assembly Government and Scottish Executive asked to provide equivalents to whom the invite would be copied;
- the working group should be aiming to have a draft strategy in place and be launching the consultation on it by the first week in March 2007; and,
- there should be a January 2007 Programme Board meeting at which the Strategy would be considered before consultation.

Agenda Item 6: Establishment of the Stakeholder Working Group

13. There was an extended discussion on how this working group would operate, how to invite membership and what it would achieve. The key point to note was that it should be more of a sounding board for the work of the Secretariat and other working groups with the main aim being to avoid a talking shop with no real input into the development of policy. To ensure full stakeholder buy-in and shared ownership, there would need to be stakeholder membership on working groups, but it would be up to the relevant working group to decide which stakeholders could provide the expertise required.

14. How the sounding board group would be established was far from clear. In the meantime, Board members were again asked to provide names and qualifications for suitable representatives and the Secretary to produce a draft remit for circulation.

Agenda Item 7: Pet Trade Code of Practice (un-numbered paper)

15. The Board noted the report of the first meeting of the working group and that it had been re-branded as the Companion Animal Code of Practice (CACoP).

16. ASFFW reported that it had no opportunity or resources to take forward its own code on fish and was happy for fish to be re-subsumed into the CACoP, if feasible at this stage.

17. The Board also noted that there had not been a sufficiently robust method of monitoring included in the launch of the Horticultural CoP and this should be considered as early as possible in progressing the new code. In addition, it was felt that early thought needed to be given to how the code should be distributed and to whom.

Agenda Item 8: Annual forum (un-numbered paper)

18. The Board discussed the possible agenda for the Annual Forum on 24 May 2006 and how it might be used, through break-out group participation, in assisting with the formulation of the GB Strategy.

19. It was suggested that the list of invitees to the forum (along with a list of those that had responded) should be circulated to Board members to ensure there had been no significant omissions.

20. The forum format would include a number of morning presentations, including an update on the co-ordinating mechanism progress (ie. establishment of the Programme Board and working groups), as well as possibly on:

- ruddy ducks;
- the Tweed catchment area invasives project (Angela Robinson to approach Tweed Forum);
- EU non-native species legislation and strategy (Niall Moore has had agreement from Piero Genovesi to speak);
- signal crayfish (Richard Cowan to approach Marine Fisheries Agency).

The afternoon would then include break-out sessions on:

- how to handle emergencies;
- the GB Strategy;
- education and public awareness; and,
- how the effectiveness of tackling invasives can be measured.

21. The Board suggested that suitable chairs and rapporteurs for the break-out sessions would need to be identified and invited as soon as possible.

Agenda Item 9: Research (including risk assessment)

22. The Scottish Executive reported that the risk assessment contract should be let next month. The contract will involve looking at an additional 20-30 species, inviting peer review from countries that already have their own

established tools, and assessing the robustness of the methodology and updating it if necessary.

23. JNCC reported that they were producing a paper with the Biological Records Centre on monitoring of non-native species.

24. It was also felt that much work had already been done looking into gaps in monitoring and that perhaps the money for gap analyses research might be better spent on actual monitoring.

25. PHD reported that they had now subsumed into their remit bee health and were in the process of completing a contingency plan from a risk assessment concerning a specific parasite. They also reported two outbreaks of Chinese longhorn beetle, which were now being investigated, as well as increasing cases of phytophthora in rhododendrons.

Agenda Item 10: Legislation

26. ASFFW reported that there was new legislation coming out of the fisheries sector in Europe on alien species in aquaculture. Richard Cowan is the leading Defra representative for Brussels.

Agenda Item 11: Programme and confirmation of venue for next meeting - 19 July

27. As noted above, the Welsh Assembly Government will identify a venue in Cardiff for the July meeting.

Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business

28. Steven Hunter reported that he had attended an event in California where they are now looking into setting up a task force to look into non-native species issues.

List of Action Points

- a) Defra and SEERAD to circulate to Board members updated organograms.
- b) The job description for the administrative HEO post (shortly to be advertised) to be circulated by the Secretariat to the Board for comments.
- c) ASFFW to keep the Board up to date with progress on its development of a risk assessment based on the plant health model.
- d) PHD to provide for circulation by the Secretariat, the terms of reference and membership for the working group established following the Reading University horticultural seminar.
- e) WAG agreed to investigate provision of a venue in Cardiff for the 19 July meeting of the Programme Board.
- f) The Secretariat to re-draft the table showing the relationships between the Board, working groups and Secretariat.
- g) The re-branded Science and Surveillance working group should be established at the earliest opportunity by the Secretariat.
- h) Defra to investigate taking forward the audit of responsibilities as soon as possible.
- i) The Secretariat to establish a list of implementation contacts for emergency situations.
- j) The Secretariat to draft a strong business case for recruiting an AO and to circulate to the Board the job description for this post.
- k) The Secretariat to investigate funding needs (other than salaries).
- l) The Secretariat to liaise with Defra's Communications Directorate about establishing a website.
- m) The Secretariat to draft and circulate a remit for the stakeholder working group/sounding board.
- n) Board members to provide names of suitable candidates for inclusion in a stakeholder working group/sound board.
- o) Defra to investigate the feasibility of including fish in the Companion Animal Code of Practice.
- p) Defra to circulate the list of invitees to the Annual Forum and the list of those that have responded so far, so that Board members could ensure there are no significant omissions.

- q) Defra to take into account Programme Board comments in continuing preparations for the Annual Forum on 24 May.