

6TH PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING ON NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Minutes

2.00, 21st March 2007
LG01, Ergon House, London

Present:

Hilary Thompson, WSC, Defra (Chair)	(HJT)
Richard Cowan, ASFFW, Defra	(RC)
Michael Dunn, WAG	(MD)
Mark Fletcher, CSL	(MF)
Stephen Hunter, PHD, Defra	(SH)
Peter Macnab, HMRC	(PM)
Ian McLean, JNCC	(IM)
Niall Moore, Secretariat	(NM)
Diane Owen, Secretariat	(DO)
Paul Raven, EA	(PR)
Angela Robinson, SEERAD	(AR)
Huw Thomas, WSC, Defra	(HT)

1. Apologies

Mike Roberts, CSL (Mark Fletcher standing in).
Peter Starling, HMRC (Peter Macnab standing in).
Deryck Steer, JNCC (Ian McLean standing in).
Kim Fellows, SEERAD (Angela Robinson standing in).
Victoria Waite, DfT.

2. Minutes of meetings on 25th October and 6th December 2006. (PB Mar07-02A and PB Mar07-02B)

The minutes of the previous two meetings were agreed and there were no matters arising.

3. Actions (Annex 1)

(PB Mar07-03)

1. Completed. (The secretariat sent the letter encouraging participation in meetings to the PB on 17/12/06).
2. Completed.
3. Ongoing. Feedback was only received from Michelle Calnan (WAG). HJT reminded the Board that a contingency plan was needed and suggested that members of the PB could be primary contacts for rapid reaction alerts unless other people were proposed. The Board agreed to be primary contacts.

4. Completed (see point 3 above).
5. Completed. The extended list of proposed members for the Sounding Board was circulated to the PB on 19/11/06. This was also to be discussed under item 8 on the agenda.
6. Completed. The draft programme for the Stakeholder Forum was to be discussed under item 9 on the agenda.
7. Completed.
8. Ongoing. Options for contingency funding were considered by members of the Board to be considerably limited as a result of general pressures on funding. However, AR (together with NM and HT) is leading on producing a wider paper on contingency planning and rapid response.

ACTION 1 – HT to update the PB on progress on producing a document on mechanisms of rapid response at the next meeting.

9. Completed.
10. Completed.
11. Completed. NM tabled paper 03A (PB Mar07-03A) at the meeting.

ACTION 2 – PB to read paper 03A and give feedback to the Secretariat by next PB meeting.

12. Carried out monthly.
13. Completed.
14. Completed.
15. Completed.
16. Completed.
17. Completed.

4. GB Strategy Update

HT informed the Board about discussions with the England Biodiversity Minister about the Strategy. Points of discussion included cost implications, the potential impacts of climate change on NNS and the development of a strategy for invasive aquatic plants. PR offered to prepare a briefing document on the last point. HJT suggested reverting to the Minister appending a briefing note to a summary of the consultation responses (once the responses had been collated and analysed).

ACTION 3 – PR to prepare a briefing document for the England Biodiversity Minister on developing a strategy for invasive non-native aquatic plants.

IM enquired if there had been ministerial level interest in Scotland and Wales by the respective ministers. AR and MD informed the Board that the relevant ministers had shown interest in the Draft Strategy and that there had been good press coverage on non-native species issues, especially in Scotland. It was agreed that there might be merit in keeping ministers up to date with the latest news. NM informed the Board that CSL Information Centre was collating

media interest on non-native species issues and proposed updating the PB at each meeting with a summary.

ACTION 4 – NM to circulate the summary of media coverage on the draft Strategy consultation launch.

The consultation ends on 23rd May 2007. It was agreed that the Secretariat, WAG, SEERAD and Defra officials would meet in early June to discuss arrangements for launching the final Strategy between September and October 2007.

ACTION 5 – HT to prepare a plan (including an outline timetable) for the launch of the final Strategy and to arrange production of a draft Implementation Plan for PB approval in advance of the next PB meeting.

5. Secretariat Report

(PB Mar07-05)

Paper 05 was an annual summary of the main activities of the Secretariat. Feedback was positive: there was perceived to be a good spread of activities, the Secretariat was being seen to be active, achieving a high profile among stakeholders, the website was functioning, was user-friendly and was being used. HJT suggested the Secretariat produce the equivalent of Defra's "24 hr report" or short one-page summary for each meeting the Secretariat attends to be circulated to the PB. It was commented that the programme of future work for the Secretariat should not overlook maintenance of the website and links. HJT suggested that the Secretariat make contact with Mike Burbridge (Defra) about the 2012 Olympics sites. AR suggested sending the Horticultural Code of Practice. It was also suggested that attendees to the Stakeholder Forum be given a questionnaire to gauge wider external feedback on progress of the Secretariat. IM enquired about the future role of the Secretariat and PB in NNS issues in the Overseas Territories. NM informed the Board that he had been approached by JNCC to deliver a 20-minute talk to the Overseas Territories INNS Group in April. HJT reminded the Board that NNS in the Overseas Territories was not part of the remit of the GB PB. HJT expected that current financial pressures would require the PB to confine itself to maintaining its present remit but better links with NGOs attending events or having links with other key topics, such as climate change, relevant to the Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies would help to maintain involvement and awareness.

ACTION 6 – PB to provide feedback on progress of the Secretariat to HJT by 23 April 2007.

ACTION 7 – Secretariat to produce a short summary of each meeting for the PB.

ACTION 8 – Secretariat to produce a brief questionnaire for attendees of the Forum to provide feedback on Secretariat progress.

6. Information Sharing on NNS issues

There was a brief discussion on how best to keep the relevant ministers and officials informed and up-to-date on NNS issues. Suggestions included regular and concise but informative emails on important issues, a monthly intelligence letter (similar to that used in PHD) or a summary of issues to follow-up or of outcomes of meetings which might need action. AR suggested having links to news items and other articles. It was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate information in the appropriate format as and when action was needed and a monthly or bi-monthly summary of the main issues and articles to keep Board members and others informed.

ACTION 9 – All to send interesting short notes to the Secretariat for distribution to the PB, with a review on how it is working in 6 months.

ACTION 10 – Secretariat to send out monthly/bimonthly Intelligence Letters (of bullet points) summarising issues of interest for the PB.

7. Risk Assessment

(PB Mar07-07)

NM updated the Board on progress of the NNRAP. Since the last PB meeting the NNRAP has met twice. Five Risk Assessments (RA) were reviewed at the last meeting. The Secretariat has commissioned another 12 RAs. The list of species was compiled from those species which have been put forward to be banned from sale under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The NNRAP will next meet in June 2007. SH reiterated the need for archiving the risk assessments of the NNRAP with a clear audit trail of how they were developed. It was agreed that the Secretariat would retain the audit trail and the website should host the assessments (either in their entirety or in summary form) where they could be viewed by all.

AR also gave an update on the Peer Review Project of the RA Scheme. The final report was being finalised and it contains approximately 20 recommendations for improvements to the scheme. These include streamlining and making the scheme more relevant to all taxa and more user-friendly.

ACTION 11 – AR to send the final Peer Review Project Report to the Secretariat when it is finalised.

ACTION 12 – Secretariat to circulate the final Peer Review Project Report (along with the annex of recommended developments of the RA Scheme) to the PB for comments.

ACTION 13 – Secretariat to circulate the flow diagram for a single risk to the PB.

8. Stakeholder Sounding Board

(PB Mar07-08)

The Board agreed that the list of over 70 proposed Stakeholder Sounding Board (SSB) Members was too long, it was too much like a consultation list

and needed to be shortened to approximately 'key' 25 people who could best represent the spread of interests. It was also agreed that the best form of communication would be via email, with closed deadlines. RC suggested using a chat-room format. HJT proposed that HT and NM prune the list to approximately 25 people for circulation with the minutes of this meeting. The PB should review the list and send comments back to the Secretariat.

ACTION 14 – HT and NM to shorten the Stakeholder Sounding Board list for circulation with the minutes. The PB should review the list and send comments back to the Secretariat.

It was agreed that the list will be publicly available (on the website) and attendees to the Forum will be informed about it. There may be times when the SSB need to be consulted in confidence and this needs to be explicit in the letter of invitation to members.

ACTION 15 – A letter of invitation onto the SSB to be drafted by the Secretariat in time for the Forum.

9. Stakeholder Forum

(PB Mar07-09 and PB Mar07-09A Draft Forum 07 Invitees (V1))

DO tabled a draft list of names and organisations of proposed invitees to the Stakeholder Forum 2007 which was compiled from invitees and attendees to the 2006 Forum, PB, Strategy WG, Strategy Dialogue Session and NNRAP contacts. DO was asked to circulate the list electronically to the PB and the PB was asked to send comments back to the Secretariat ASAP.

ACTION 16 – DO to circulate Mar07-09A Draft Forum 07 Invitees (V1) to the PB by 20 April 2007.

ACTION 17 – PB to send comments on the Draft Forum 07 Invitees list to the Secretariat by 20 April 2007.

The proposed programme for the Forum was discussed and it was agreed that there would be four speakers in the morning session each giving 15-minute presentation on:

1. Western Isles hedgehogs/mink management (David Maclennan, SNH)
2. Industry perspectives (Keith Davenport, OATA)
3. NGO perspectives (Paul Walton, RSPB and Link)
4. All-Ireland progress (Cathy Maguire, Enviro Centre)

There would also be time allocated for questions after each talk. It was suggested that the potential US speaker could chair the monitoring workshop and that the *Ludwigia* control could be presented as a poster display and be highlighted in NM's opening talk. It was suggested that the Industry speaker could focus on how industry can make a difference and for the NGO speaker to emphasise taking responsibility. It was also put forward that the speakers

tie their talks into the workshop sessions by ending with a short series of key points/questions to kick start the workshop session.

ACTION 18 – PB to give feedback on the proposed workshop sessions to the Secretariat.

ACTION 19 – NM to finalise the Forum programme and produce a series of points/questions to prompt discussion in the workshop sessions by 20th April.

10. Monitoring and Surveillance Mechanism (PB Mar07-10)

HT gave a brief update and summarised the paper on a project to scope the development of the central data repository promised in the draft strategy. He announced that the first draft report was under consideration and the final project report would be complete by 31st May in time for the next PB meeting.

ACTION 20 – Secretariat to circulate the draft report to the PB when it is completed.

11. Public Awareness Working Group (PB Mar07-11)

NM introduced the paper outlining the suggestion to set up a small interim working group (PAWG) to look at setting up a media and communications Strategy. HT reminded the Board that the Draft Framework Strategy contained details of the role of such a WG and suggested that it be used as a guide for the remit of this initial group. It was agreed that the initial WG would consist of no more than six individuals. The PB was asked for names of potential members of the interim WG. Suggestions included:

- Luisa Diaz, Defra Press Office
- Keith Davenport
- Defra Legal representative

The need for PR people and not just policy people was acknowledged. It was pointed out that an opportunity to gauge baseline interest/knowledge on non-native species issues prior to the final Strategy taking real effect should be looked for and HT reminded the Board that the draft strategy in chapter 9 proposes a baseline public attitude/knowledge survey which could help in measuring future success. RC reminded the Board that clearance will be needed for surveys and the Secretariat was asked to find out about the process of carrying out a questionnaire/survey and the likely costs involved.

ACTION 21 – Secretariat to investigate the process of carrying out a questionnaire/survey and its likely costs.

12. Reports on progress with *Luwigia*, Bumblebees and Bullfrogs

NM updated the Board on progress with *Luwigia* and bullfrogs. *Ludwigia* does not grow much over winter but treatment at known sites would resume shortly. There had been little action with bullfrogs as they are very difficult to find during winter. However, there had been reports that they had spread further than the original location and an internally-funded survey by Natural England was being planned to assess the situation.

HT informed the Board that Barry Gardiner had invited representatives of three companies who export non-native bumblebee subspecies to GB to meet with Defra, JNCC, NE and CSL officials to discuss the concerns, including that end-users may be unwittingly breaking the law by releasing imported non-native bees into the wild. Discussion was constructive and open and the companies are now considering whether to apply for licences from Natural England and the Devolved Administrations to continue to sell their bees. They are also considering how to advise their customers about the legal aspects and how to avoid releasing the bees into the wild. HJT suggested such advice be advertised in the bee/suitable horticultural literature.

13. Emerging Issues

Chytrid fungus had been found in native amphibians but the source of the outbreak was thought to be from diseased pets rather than an invasive non-native species. HJT reminded the Board that diseases were not part of the PB remit.

14. AOB 1 (PB Mar07-14 Plant labelling Scheme)

The Secretariat tabled a paper on a Voluntary Plant Labelling Scheme drafted by David Slawson from Defra PHD. The PB was asked for comments to be sent to the Secretariat.

ACTION 22 – PB to send comments on the Voluntary Plant Labelling Scheme (PB Mar07-14 Plant Labelling Scheme) to the Secretariat by April 30 th .
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AOB 2

NM announced that there had been some interest in the UK BRAG reviving its non-native subgroup as a working group reporting to the PB. HJT asked for this proposal to be brought to the next PB meeting.

AOB 3

There was a suggestion for setting up an Island Invasives Group. HJT asked for this proposal to be brought to the next PB meeting also.

AOB 5

HT informed the Board that in his budget speech, the Chancellor had announced a consultation on land remediation tax relief and a chapter of the

document was proposing that infestations of Japanese Knotweed should be a qualifying criterion for such relief.

AOB 6

It was suggested that consideration should be given to whether the Forestry Commission should be on the Board.

<p>ACTION 23 – HT to draft a short paper on the potential of Forestry Commission participation in the PB and to circulate it to the PB.</p>
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Next meeting:

July 2007 in Edinburgh, details to be confirmed.

ANNEX 1.

4th and 5th Programme Board Meeting on Non-native Species
25th October 2006, York and 6th December 2006, London.

ACTIONS

PB 4 - October 2006			
	Description	Deadline	Completed
1	NM to draft letter (for the Chair) to encourage participation in PB meetings and to circulate to the PB.	ASAP	✓
2	DO to email spider diagram to Diana Reynolds and Michael Dunn.	ASAP	✓
3	PB to nominate people for primary and secondary contacts for emergencies/rapid reaction and return the nominations to the Secretariat.		
4	NM to circulate the draft rapid reaction list once PB members have made their suggestions.		
5	Secretariat to circulate the extended list of proposed members for the Sounding Board.	ASAP	✓
6	NM to expand on the suggestions for the next Forum and to circulate to the PB.	For the next PB meeting	✓
7	HT and NM to arrange a meeting with Defra sponsors of the Environment Agency and Natural England to discuss their corporate priorities and contingency funding.		✓
8	HT and NM to develop a document detailing options for funding contingency responses and mechanisms of delivery.		In progress
9	PB to send any comments on the website to DO.	ASAP	✓
10	NM to forward the agenda for the All Ireland meeting to IM when it arrives.		✓
11	NM to prepare a summary of the All Ireland meeting for the next full PB.	For the next full PB meeting	In progress
12	DO to circulate NM's diary at the beginning of each month to inform the PB in case any issues or sensitivities need to be addressed.	ASAP	✓
13	Secretariat to add a flow diagram to the Risk Analysis document to be circulated to the PB subgroup.	ASAP	✓
14	PB subgroup to develop and agree a way forward with the RA mechanism.	ASAP	✓
15	DO to propose meeting dates for early December for PB to discuss the Strategy and funding options, the next full PB meeting at the end of February /early March and the Forum in mid April 2007.	ASAP	✓

PB 5 - December 2006			
	Description	Deadline	Completed
16	PR to advise HT on a paragraph referring to the Environment Agency Strategy.	ASAP	✓
17	HT to circulate the next draft to the PB when it is issued to officials for comments.	ASAP	✓