

4TH MEETING OF THE UK BIODIVERSITY INDICATORS FORUM

16 October 2006, Defra Offices, 3-8 Whitehall Place, London.

Objectives of the day:

1. Awareness raising, partnership building, development of common understanding and co-ordination of UK biodiversity indicators work.
2. Clarification of the roles and responsibilities for UK CBD implementation and measurement of progress towards the 2010 biodiversity targets (global and European)
3. Promotion of co-ordinated action on indicators and measuring the 2010 target

Summary of presentations

Outcome from CBD COP8 - global indicators and the 2010 targets, Andrew Stott, Defra

The target set at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 is to '*achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth*'.

The Eighth Meeting of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (COP8) was held in Brazil in March 2006. COP8 endorsed recommendations for global biodiversity indicators as tested in the 'Global Biodiversity Outlook 2' <http://www.biodiv.org/gbo2/default.shtml> as a provisional framework for assessing the 2010 target.

COP8 also decided that the fourth national reports should be submitted by March 2009 for use with the global indicators in the 3rd Global Biodiversity Outlook which would report on progress with the 2010 target.

The Global Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, Neville Ash, WCMC

Further development of the set of Global Indicators will be undertaken by the 2010 Biodiversity Indicators Partnership (2010BIP). 2010BIP has received \$3.6 million from the Global Environment Fund to fulfil the following aims:

1. To develop the set of global biodiversity indicators
2. To strengthen the links between indicators at national, regional and global scales
3. To develop links between biodiversity indicators and Millennium Development Goals.

Indicator development will take place between Dec 06 and Dec 09.

Developments in Europe - Biodiversity Communication, structural / sustainable development indicators and the 'biodiversity index', Anne Teller, DG Environment, European Commission

In May 2006, the EC issued its communication 'Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 — and beyond: sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being'. The Communication includes annexes setting out an action plan and a series of draft headline indicators. Actions are listed in four policy areas:

1. Biodiversity in the EU
2. The EU and global biodiversity
3. Biodiversity and climate change
4. Improving the knowledge base

The development of the indicators is co-ordinated through SEBI2010 (see below). There are no plans at present to create a single, composite biodiversity index, instead ideas for a multi-partite index showing state (birds), pressure (fragmentation) and response (protected areas) are being considered.

Developments in Europe - Progress with SEBI2010, James Williams, JNCC

Development of the EC Headline Biodiversity Indicators is being undertaken by SEBI2010 (Streamlining European 2010 Biodiversity Indicators). Sixteen indicators are being developed within seven themes, based on the international framework agreed at COP8. Six expert groups have been established to develop the indicators (species, ecosystems, genetics, nitrogen, invasives and sustainable use). Other indicators in the set are being developed in other ways, e.g. the marine trophic index as a subset of the indicator being developed at global level by the University of British Columbia. Sixty nine candidate indicators have been documented and reviewed by SEBI2010. Of these:

1. Six have been ranked 'A' – data available for reporting in 2006.
2. Twenty have been ranked 'B' – indicator and documentation should be completed in 2006.
3. Forty-three have been ranked 'C' – indicator and documentation needs significant further development, and will not be available before 2007.

Summary of discussion points: European and Global indicators

1.	<p><i>Is the selection of indicators driven by data availability rather than as assessment of data requirement?</i></p> <p>Questions were raised regarding the choice of birds as a surrogate for all species; the paucity of information on the marine environment; and the focus on taxonomic groups rather than ecological guilds that are associated with particular ecosystems. However, the general feeling was that the immediacy of targets requires that indicators are selected where data are available. At the same time we should be identifying gaps in the coverage of the indicators and underlying data. This was expressed as</p>
----	---

	<p>the question ‘what do our selected indicators not tell us?’ or ‘how indicative are our indicators?’</p> <p>There is some gap analysis underway in the UK (through the Environmental Research Funders Forum) and in Europe (through DG Environment’s Shared Environmental Information System).</p> <p>There were a number of participants that felt that this gap analysis was a role for the scientific community.</p>
2.	<p><i>Is the 2010 report going to be out-of-date before it is published?</i></p> <p>With a March 2009 deadline for submission of national reports, the 2010 assessment is likely to be based on data from 2007/8. There was a general agreement that we need to distinguish two processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The international reporting process. • The ongoing updates of national data. <p>Both processes were equally important, the former to maintain political momentum, the latter to ensure transparency and honesty. It was also recognised that the former had acted as a catalyst for the latter.</p>
3.	<p><i>How will reporting of the national contributions to the global target be assessed?</i></p> <p>Two participants identified the text-only reporting process as a potential limiting factor on the ability to report objectively and consistently to COP.</p>
4.	<p><i>Will the UK national report to the CBD be used by the UK Government, or just seen as an international obligation?</i></p> <p>Defra representatives confirmed that previous reports had perhaps been less useful for national application, but that the intention for 2010 was that national and international reporting mechanism would be aligned and that there was a clear intention to use the reports to inform UK policy. The reporting process ensured that all aspects of implementation of CBD were considered at the national level.</p>
5.	<p><i>How will we manage the range of reports to be produced?</i></p> <p>Defra representatives reported that the intention was that Defra and JNCC would seek to establish a website, on which UK data could be updated annually, if it were available. This data could then be extracted to provide reports to meet national or international obligations. Defra were considering publication of an A6 booklet ‘UK Biodiversity Indicators in Your Pocket’ in 2007 and 2009, in addition to a shorter summary leaflet.</p>
6.	<p><i>Who is the audience for the UK report?</i></p> <p>Two primary audiences were identified: decision makers and the general public.</p> <p>One of the advantages of indicators is that they simplify the issue of biodiversity change and can be used to raise awareness amongst the general public (it was noted that this is why, in one sense, ‘birds’ make such good indicators – they carry a high degree of public resonance).</p> <p>For decision makers, the intention is to influence politicians and policy makers in non-biodiversity sectors (e.g. transport planners). In this sense, there are similarities between the decision makers and the</p>

	<p>general public – the indicators have to carry a simple message and it must be clear how they were linked to social and economic well-being.</p> <p>Wouter van Reeth suggested that experience in Flanders had shown that it was essential that there was good communication between scientists and decision makers prior to report production to ensure that data were presented appropriately.</p> <p>Given that indicators are a high level communication tool, participants stressed the importance of a communication plan.</p>
--	--

Experience of applying the CBD/EU indicator framework in Europe, Wouter van Reeth, INBO, Flanders

In Flanders, a three-stage reporting process for biodiversity indicators has been established, taking place over a two year cycle:

1. Production of a scientific report, following a request for information.
2. Communication of the results, culminating in production of different reports for different audiences.
3. Utilisation of the data, and assessment of the degree of influence.

The importance of the communication process was stressed, as was the value of collaboration between social and natural sciences and early engagement between report producers and prospective audience. Further information is available on <http://www.natuurindicatoren.be>.

The Flanders approach also applies the CBD framework and has identified similar indicators to those used in the UK.

Developing the UK indicators, Andrew Stott, Defra

In 2005, the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee established a working group which would draw up proposals for a small set of headline UK biodiversity indicators, which would:

1. Conform to EC and CBD frameworks,
2. Utilise existing country data as far as was possible.

The working group proposed 18 headline indicators, presented by Andy Stott. Rocky Harris clarified that the 'public expenditure on biodiversity' indicator included data from across all Government Departments.

Summary of discussion points: UK indicators

1.	<p><i>Are there any gaps in coverage of the UK indicators?</i></p> <p>Concerns were raised about the taxonomic coverage of the proposed Marine Trophic Indicators and attention was drawn to work being undertaken at CEFAS and MBA. It was suggested that this work should be reviewed as soon as possible.</p>
----	--

	<p>The connectivity indicator also requires significant further development. This is being led by Ed Mackey, SNH.</p> <p>Participants asked if there was a process whereby new indicator proposals could be considered. Defra responded that the indicators should be reviewed periodically to ensure that the best data and most relevant indicators were being used, and to maintain alignment with EU and CBD work.</p>
2.	<p><i>What associated communication activities should be undertaken?</i></p> <p>The proposals for the UK Biodiversity In Your Pocket publication were generally welcomed. Participants also picked up on Wouter's suggestions and asked whether a more through assessment of audience needs was required.</p>
3.	<p><i>To what extent has work on valuing ecosystem services been integrated into the indicator framework?</i></p> <p>There has been some attempt, but little progress on integrating the two approaches. Some work on valuing ecosystem services had been undertaken at UK level (by Defra) and European level (by the European Environment Agency). In addition, the work is being done to evaluate costs associated with control of alien invasives).</p>
4.	<p><i>What is the proposed procedure for involving the devolved administrations in the development of the UK Indicators?</i></p> <p>The Steering Group will have representatives from each of the devolved administrations (currently envisaged that this would be a statistician).</p>
5.	<p><i>What progress has been made on the indicator for genetic resources?</i></p> <p>Concern voiced over 'genetic resources' being the under-represented issue in biodiversity conservation. The group agreed that work on biodiversity and on genetic resources should be joined up (see outputs).</p>

Martin Brasher's concluding remarks

1. The Forum had been a very useful and timely discussion. All speakers and participants were thanked.
2. There is a tight timetable for the development of indicators and production of reports to feed into the 2010 reporting.
3. We need to ensure that we engage with potential users of the indicator reports early in the process and ensure that we have a communication strategy.
4. The Forum is generally seen as a useful means of updating interested parties on the policy and process behind the development of indicators and sharing knowledge and experience with developing indicators. Support for the continuing use and development of the website and annual meetings. Possible topics for future meetings include gap analysis and communication.

OUTCOMES

1. The UK 2010 indicators Steering Group to further consider how best to communicate the UK 2010 Biodiversity Indicators and involvement of communication specialists.

2. Defra/JNCC to convene meeting of those involved in production of Marine Trophic Index and agree scope and timetable for development.
3. Steering Group to discuss how to make progress with developing the genetic indicator.