

UK SPA SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

MEETING 2002/1 17TH JANUARY 2002

9.30 - 14.40 Plas Penrhos, Bangor, Wales

Approved Minutes

Present (around table):

Ian Bainbridge (IB) (Chair) – SEERAD
James Robinson (JR) – WWT
Geoff Audcent (GA) – DEFRA
Jill Thomas (JT) – WAG
Don Morrissey (DM) – ABP Research
Sue Evans (SE) - CLBA
Jeremy Wilson (JW) - Scottish Environment
Link

Sian Whitehead (SW) - CCW
Gwyn Williams (GW) – RSPB
Nigel Buxton (NB) – SNH
David Stroud (DAS) – JNCC
Ben Fraser (BF) – EN
Helen Baker (HB) (Secretary) - JNCC

Apologies:

Dave Burges (WWF - on behalf of Wildlife & Countryside Link), Andrew Clark (NFU), Peter Clement (EN), Nicola Donlon (WAG), Ian Enlander (DOENI), Liam Mathers (SEERAD), Tanya Olmeda-Hodge (Country Land & Business Association), Trevor Salmon (DEFRA), David Smallshire (DEFRA), Chris Spray (Water UK).

1. Introductions and apologies

- 1.1 The chair welcomed new representatives and reiterated the conduct and role of the Group. He informed the Group that DEFRA is seeking a representative from the marine sector to join the Group.
- 1.2 Apologies were received as listed above.

2. Minutes of 1st meeting

- 2.1 The Group approved the minutes of the 1st meeting (1st November 2001) without amendment.
- 2.2 In future, actions detailed in the work programme will also be listed in the minutes.
- 2.3 It was agreed that publication of papers from the Group on the JNCC website would include; the Terms of Reference, approved minutes of meetings, and briefing papers as agreed by the Group.

3. Population estimates

- 3.1 **Avian Population Estimates Panel** (briefing paper from JNCC/RSPB/WWT) - DAS summarised the background to the APEP. Due to FMD Seabird 2000 has been delayed and new seabird estimates will not be ready for the 2002 revision of UK population estimates. A further recommendation was agreed; that the Group considers how to evaluate the revised estimates with respect to the development of the UK SPA network (revised briefing attached). Concern was raised over the complexity of monitoring and publication cycles, and the potential confusion that may arise. JNCC agreed to discuss publication cycles with the APEP and report back to the Group. The APEP briefing will be published via the JNCC website.

Action: JNCC to discuss publication cycles with the APEP.
Action: JNCC to give update on APEP at May meeting of the Group.

- 3.2 **Waterbird and wader estimates** (briefing paper from JNCC/WWT/BTO) - DAS summarised the background to these 'sister' publications. The Group recognised that population estimates need to be peer reviewed and published prior to their use. JNCC agreed to contact the editors of relevant journals to discuss the relevance of population estimate papers and ways in which they could be fast-tracked for publication once accepted. JNCC will update the APEP on these discussions, and report back to the Group in September 2002. The Group accepted the recommendations of the waterbird population estimates briefing. The briefing will be published via the JNCC website.

Action: JNCC to contact the editors of relevant journals to discuss importance of publication of population estimates and potential for fast-tracking, update the APEP on these discussions, and report back to the Group in September 2002.

4. Surveys - progress reports:

- 4.1 **Statutory Conservation Agency/RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Survey** (briefing paper from JNCC/RSPB) - DAS summarised the background to SCARABBS. The Group accepted the recommendations of the briefing with the following amendments;

- ♦ The Group agreed to defer further consideration of review of the SPA suite for peregrine until after the results of the 2002 survey are available (anticipated mid 2003).
- ♦ The Group also agreed to defer further consideration of review of the SPA suite for golden eagle until after the results of the 2003 survey are available (anticipated early 2004), excepting the ongoing classification of SPAs for this species on Mull and Skye.
- ♦ A full survey of Chough will take place in 2002. There are two issues relating to Chough; a review of ecological needs of the species and how this relates to defining SPAs, and the results of the 2002 survey and implications for the SPA suite for this species. It was agreed that the work programme for this species be maintained with presentation of a paper on ecology by CCW/SNH/RSPB for the March 2002 meeting, followed by review of the results of the 2002 survey when the data are available.

The SCARABBS briefing will be published via the JNCC website.

Action: CCW/SNH/RSPB to present a briefing paper on Chough ecology and implications for SPA process to the Group for discussion at the March 2002 meeting.

- 4.2 **Rare Breeding Birds Panel** (briefing paper from JNCC) - DAS summarised the background to the RBBP and current issues relating to data management. The quality of data received from the RBBP is very high. However, while geographic coverage is very good for many species there are gaps for some, which is partly due to some species data sets not being submitted to the Panel. RBBP has drawn up an action plan that will enable it to address issues related to data acquisition and use. For species considered by those collecting data to be vulnerable to human disturbance/persecution the issue of data release is of great concern and data may not be made readily available. Confidentiality agreements with landowners are occasionally made to facilitate access for collection of data, and these data are again not readily available for statutory use. The Group agreed that an analysis of risk at the species level should be made to clarify which species, if any, may be at real risk from release of data to the general public. Also, that this analysis be made available to the Natura Steering Group with a recommendation to that group to consider policy relating to data use for vulnerable species. The Group accepted the recommendations of the RBBP briefing. A summary version of the briefing will be published via the JNCC website.

Action: RSPB/JNCC to develop paper on risk to individual species from public release of data, and present this to the Group for consideration at its March (or May) meeting.

Action: Following the above action, the Group to refer the issue to the Natura Steering Group, with supporting brief and a recommendation that the latter group consider policy issues relating to data use for species vulnerable to disturbance.

Action: JNCC to report back to the Group on developments in data supply to the RBBP later in 2002.

- 4.3 **Wetland Bird Survey developments** (briefing paper from WWT/JNCC) - JR summarised the background to WeBS and current activity within the partnership. Not all wetland SPAs are covered by the scheme - some are covered by other monitoring schemes or occasional special surveys. The WeBS partnership recognises that data capture from other surveys needs to be enhanced. However, some wetland SPAs are not covered by regular monitoring schemes and require the development of a formal approach to collection of data. The WeBS partnership is currently working to assess needs. The Group accepted the recommendations of the WeBS briefing. The WeBS briefing will be published via the JNCC website.

Action: WWT/JNCC to report on progress in WeBS scheme later in 2002.

5. Sites for species with data since 1997

- 5.1 **Spotted Crane** - HB informed the group that data are now available from the 1999 survey, but that a detailed analysis is required and JNCC/RSPB would present a paper to the March meeting of the Group.

Action: JNCC/RSPB to present analysis of Spotted Crane data to the Group in March.

- 5.2 **Ring Ouzel** (briefing paper from JNCC/RSPB) - HB introduced the briefing on this migratory species. This concludes that no areas support a population that would qualify under Stage 1.2 of the UK SPA selection guidelines and that there was no strong case for selecting areas under Stage 1.4. However, the briefing was based on taking the biogeographic population of Europe as the comparative population. EN presented good additional evidence that there are three distinct biogeographic populations (races) in Europe, and that the UK should make comparisons against the North-west European population; *Turdus torquatus torquatus*. The Group agreed that a more detailed analysis was needed and requested that JNCC/RSPB/EN present a paper to the May meeting which includes a list of general areas which may support qualifying populations. RSPB has done work on assessing the role of site-based protection for dispersed migratory species and agreed to circulate this to the Group. On the basis that more work is needed on this species, this briefing will not be published via the JNCC website.

Action: RSPB to circulate assessment of site-based protection for dispersed migratory species.

Action: JNCC/RSPB/EN to present a paper on ring ouzels to the May meeting of the Group.

- 5.3 **Twite** - HB informed the Group that data were not yet available for developing a paper for this meeting.

Action: JNCC/RSPB/EN to present an analysis of Twite data to the Group in March.

6. Common Standards Monitoring

- 6.1 HB summarised the background to Common Standards Monitoring (CSM). The Group agreed with the recommendations in the brief, in particular that they wish to be consulted over development of CSM for SPAs at the appropriate time.
The CSM briefing will be published via the JNCC website.

7. Passage Species

- 7.1 Further development relating to passage species had not been made, and JNCC offered to present a more detailed report at the May meeting of the Group.

Action: JNCC to present a paper to the Group at the May meeting regarding developments in consideration of passage species.

8. Progress from bilateral discussions

- 8.1 The RSPB has not pursued bilateral discussions with the Country Agencies since the last meeting, as it has yet to complete its review of the issues previously raised (as agreed at the first meeting of the UK SPA SWG). It will seek to begin such discussions in February/March 2002.
- 8.2 EN agreed actions at the last bilateral discussion with RSPB, many of which are in the Group's work programme. In order to progress assessment of the Nene Valley, co-ordinated waterbird counts have just been carried out by WeBS counters in the valley. This follows a meeting convened by Northants County Council where representations were made to the WeBS counters by EN, Northants CC and WWT. The RSPB also attended this meeting.
- 8.3 SNH agreed priority actions with RSPB at the last bilateral discussion, and has reported in part on these at the last SWG meeting (Capercaillie), but will also present further update at the next meeting on ongoing work.
- 8.4 CCW has continued work on Chough issues and future work on this species is outlined in the Group's work programme.

9. Review work programme of Group

- 9.1 The actions arising from this meeting and agreed revisions are now in a revised work programme attached to these minutes [UKSPASWG PLAN 3].
- 9.2 The issue of adding new qualifying species to existing SPAs was raised, as new information on species will come forward from new surveys. The Group recognised that a process needs to be developed for doing this, and suggested that a system which 'batches' such changes, perhaps every one to three years, may be the best to facilitate consultation with landowners and occupiers. It was agreed to refer this matter to the Natura Steering Group for their consideration. Data contributions from landowners/occupiers are recognised as being of value in the process, but it was agreed that such data should undergo the same checks as those collected from surveys.

Action: The Group to refer development of the process of adding new qualifying species to existing SPAs to the Natura Steering Group.

10. Other matters arising from the minutes of the first meeting

- 10.1 None.

11. Any other business

11.1 None.

12. Date and venue of next meeting

12.1 The next meeting will be on 13th March 2002, and will be in Peterborough (in the Large Blue Butterfly Room at English Nature, Northminster House).

12.2 Following that, a meeting will be held on 8th May 2002 in Edinburgh (venue to be confirmed).

Attachments:

Agreed minutes of 1st meeting

Revised briefings - APEP, SCARABBS

Revised Work Programme [UKSPASWG PLAN3]

Revised List of Members

UK SPA SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

MEETING 2002/1, 17TH JANUARY 2002

Action Point/Forward Work Programme Summary

(In Chronological order and not minute order, batched by work period or future meeting, lead organisation underlined)

Actions to be discharged prior to 13th March 2002 meeting: (Papers to be submitted to secretariat by 27th February 2002)

Action: CCW/SNH/RSPB to present a paper on Chough ecology and implications for SPA process to the Group for discussion at the March 2002 meeting.

Action: RSPB/JNCC to present a paper on risk to individual species from public release of data, and present this to the Group for consideration at its March (or May) meeting.

Action: JNCC/RSPB to present an analysis of Spotted Crake data to the Group in March.

Action: JNCC/RSPB/EN to present an analysis of Twite data to the Group in March.

Work Plan: RSPB to present a paper on cropped habitats - a review of species/habitat considerations and data availability/needs.

Work Plans: SNH to update Group on status of designations for Capercaillie, Hen harrier and Golden eagle.

Work Plan: All to provide updates on bilateral discussions.

Actions to be discharged prior to 8th May 2002 meeting: (Papers to be submitted to secretariat by 24th April 2002)

Action: JNCC to give update on APEP at May meeting of the Group.

Action: JNCC/RSPB/EN to present a paper on ring ouzels to the May meeting of the Group.

Action: JNCC to present a paper to the Group at the May meeting regarding developments in consideration of passage species.

General actions for future consideration:

Action: JNCC to discuss publication cycles with the APEP.

Action: JNCC to contact the editors of relevant journals to discuss importance of publication of population estimates and potential for fast-tracking, update the APEP on these discussions, and report back to the Group in September 2002.

Action: The Group to refer the issue of species risk to the Natura Steering Group, with supporting brief and a recommendation that the latter group consider policy issues relating to data use for species vulnerable to disturbance.

Action: JNCC to report back to the Group on developments in the RBBP later in 2002.

Action: WWT/JNCC to report on progress in WeBS scheme later in 2002.

Action: RSPB to circulate assessment of site-based protection for dispersed migratory species.

Action: The Group to refer development of the process of adding new qualifying species to existing SPAs to the Natura Steering Group.