

**Minutes of the First Meeting of the Tracking Mammals
Partnership Steering Group, MRC Meeting Rooms, Park
Crescent, 7 April 2004**

Those present:

Jessa Battersby, TMP Co-ordinator (JB)
Paul Bright, RHUL (PB)
Jackie Brinton, DI (JBR)
Christina Buesching, WildCRU (CB)
Colin Catto, BCT (CC)
Dave Cowan, CSL (DC)
Kevin Hall, EA (KH)
Melanie Hardie, JNCC (MH)
Stephen Harris, BU Chair (SH)
Trevor James, NBN (TJ)
Valerie Keeble, PTES (VK)
David Noble, BTO (DN)
Chris Newman, WildCRU (CN)
Nigel Sharp, NAW (NS)
Georgette Shearer, TMS (GS)
Debbie Smith, DEFRA (DS)
Richard Walmsley, EA (RW)
David Wembridge, PTES & MTUK (DW)

1. *Apologies*

Mairi Cole, SNH
Tony Dalby-Welsh, BDS
Matt Heydon, DEFRA
David Macdonald, WildCRU
Jean Matthews, CCW
John Milburne, EHS
Tony Mitchell-Jones, EN
Robert Raynor, SNH
Roger Trout, FC

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting, TMP 11.5

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be a true record of proceedings.

3. Matters arising from the minutes and not covered by other agenda items

Action 1. JB received a few press cuttings about the launch, and noted there had been some coverage of the launch, but not a great deal. This action was now completed.

Action 2. Carried forward

Action 3. Completed, to be discussed under item 4.

Action 4. Completed

Action 5. Completed, to be discussed under item 4.

Action 6. To be discussed under item 5.

Action 7. Completed, discussed under item 5.

Action 8. To be discussed under item 6.

Action 9. To be discussed under item 4.

Action 10. To be discussed under item 3.

JB asked attendees if IWG 10.6 could be signed off today. It was noted that in paragraph the terms 'know accuracy' in brackets should be removed. All agreed that the document could be placed on the TMP website.

SH enquired whether prospective survey organisers had to meet all criteria as set out in this document for a survey to be included into the TMP survey listings. It was decided that this was a guidance document only, and details of how surveys are selected should be posted on the website along side this, i.e. send information to JB in the first instance to be presented and selected at the TMP annual meeting.

Action 1. JB to put criteria paper on the website with an introductory note.

4. Co-ordinator's report

This fell into five distinct parts

Focus Group Meetings

Initially there were 8 groups but in order to reduce the number of meetings people potentially have to attend, that has been changed to 6 groups, with the NBMP being included in the multi species group and the amalgamation of mustelids and riparian species groups. JB gave a summary of the main issues covered in the Urban Species Focus group and the Deer Focus group (the draft minutes of these meetings were sent out prior to the meeting).

Website

Recent updates include the addition of recent reports, the new management structure and focus group meeting documents. Proposed changes included modifying the surveillance and monitoring programme page to fit in with the focus groups management structure. JB noted that not all organisations had two-way links to the TMP site, and that it was important to show the partnership was working effectively, to prospective funders and the general public. RW added that Regional Observatories were being set up to share the production, analysis and dissemination of intelligence and research related to regional policy.

Action 2: Check that individual organisations' websites are linked to the TMP website - ALL

Action 3: RW to send contacts and details of these regional observatory sites to JB

TJ suggested that in the future all the TMP survey data should be tagged (using the TMP logo or some metadata information) to ensure all end users were aware that the organisations are linked.

Work programme for the next year (SG1.2)

Updated to include more detail but structured as before using the four strands of work, financial, surveillance and monitoring programme, management of meetings and communication JB has produced quarterly targets and projects for general information. All agreed this was satisfactory.

- 1 ***Future timetable.*** It was noted that the majority of JB's time in 2004 will be spent preparing the first TMP report (discussed under item 5.). JB advised that she would be giving a talk on TMP at The Mammal Society conference on 17 April and that there was also a paper by JB and Jeremy Greenwood (BTO) in the latest edition of Mammal Review, which covered the monitoring symposium held two years ago. The paper introduced the symposium and mentioned the setting up of the TMP.
- 2 ***Workshops.*** There have been two workshops to date, the Volunteers' Workshop held in July (the report of which will be coming soon and placed on the website) and a Health and Safety and Volunteers Workshop held in February. JB noted that the H7S workshop had been very successful with excellent speakers taking part. The first draft of the proceedings has been circulated to attendees and all the speakers and experts that attended to pass comment, once signed off this report will be a chapter in the Volunteers Handbook. TJ will also be using a summary of this in more generic terms for the NBN website. JB noted that decisions on the best H7S approach for the partnership could be taken at the next volunteer and Data Management subgroup meeting, planned for June.

5. TMP first report (tabled SG1.3)

JB had prepared the summary, mindful that as the first report it will need to be a much more substantial and detailed account of the TMP and its work than subsequent annual updates. SG1.3 outlined possible structure, content and cost implications for various options for all to consider and determine the course of action.

All were asked for suggestions and ideas for each of the chapters and title as well as species photos and a brief description of each organisation's objectives within the TMP.

The suggested format of the report was discussed, with some questioning the usefulness of publishing a large (100 page plus) account for anyone other than government and potential funders, considering the large cost implications. It was felt that this would not be appropriate for volunteers.

Other options discussed included: a) reducing the size of the printed report by placing various sections, such as the species pages and organisation summary on the website only; b) producing a CD-rom of the main report and placing it on the web as a PDF download and; c) producing a limited print run of hard copies to send to Government and prospective funders as well as a smaller summary leaflet to send to all volunteers.

It was noted for the report to be archived and referenced there must be a least 6 hard copies held at various reference libraries. Therefore, there was a general consensus towards producing two documents, one of approximately 100 pages as set out by JB in SG1.3 and a 6-8 page summary leaflet to send to all volunteers. There was still debate on what to include and not include in the main report (whether any sections should be placed on web instead etc.)

The issue of funding was also discussed. JNCC has guaranteed £5000 for producing the report and there is a strong possibility of more if required. However, as detailed in SG1.3 the costs may be far higher than this and JB asked organisation representatives if they would be prepared to contribute up to £200 each towards the cost of production. A similar request had been made for organisations to contribute £100.00 towards the cost of launching the TMP in 2003, and many organisations had committed to this, but funding had not been required in the end. A small amount of funding from organisations within the partnership would ensure that the report was a joint and unifying venture. There was some feeling that this was a government report and should be funded by the government. Several organisations were averse to the idea, but did agree to put it to their boards.

The possibility of approaching outside funding for this production was also raised.

Action 4. ALL to send species photos (digital) and a 250-300 word summary of why their respective organisation is involved in the TMP, and what they contribute and gain by being in the partnership. DEADLINE of 30th April 2004.

Action 5. ALL to send ideas and suggestions for main report format, contents and title to JB by 30 th April 2004. JB to circulate synopsis of comments received.

Action 6. ALL to ask their organisation about contributing up to £200.00 towards the cost of report production and launch and advise JB.

Action 7. JB to investigate the costs of CD-rom and 6-8 page leaflet production. JB also to investigate the possibility of outside funding for report production.

6. *Forward plan for surveillance and monitoring programme SG1.4 & SG1.5*

SG1.4 is a summary spreadsheet on all the mammal monitoring and surveillance projects and programmes being carried out by the TMP organisations, JB asked that the gaps of information be filled in by the respective survey organisers. Many attendees questioned the usefulness and value of such a document to anyone other than the co-ordinator. It was felt that the column on costs could be misleading because they were calculated in different ways and the component costs were not itemised. VK, GS, DN suggested that the costs could be replaced with a unit of volunteer effort or hours (which needs to be supplied by the respective organisations for each survey). JB and RW pointed out that such a document helps to highlight areas where there needs to be more work and where resources are required. After some discussion it was agreed that it was a good idea to collate all the information to show species coverage and detail the value for money that the TMP is achieving, as well as provide information on who is organising and running the surveillance schemes. It was agreed that JB should continue with the present format and make a simplified version available on the website. It was agreed that surveys that were not strictly part of the TMP programme should be included in the spreadsheet for completeness of information, but a clear distinction should be drawn between TMP and non-TMP surveys and programmes.

Action 8. ALL survey organisers to fill in the missing information of SG1.4 and return to JB by the end of April.

Action 9. JB to create a simplified version of SG1.4 to place on the website.

SG1.5 gave a breakdown of JNCC's financial contribution to the TMP and requested funding for 2005/6. It was noted that this information may form part of the report. It was agreed that the TMP was providing very good value for money and that significantly more funding was required to carry out all the surveys and fill in the gaps of poorly covered species. JB noted that the group should begin to plan for future surveys to include the poorly covered species, as well as suggest further ways of collecting funds. JB also noted that a substantial proportion of JNCC's annual budget, after staff costs, was committed to long-term surveillance and monitoring programmes.

Action 10. All to pass comment on SG1.5 to JB

7. *Collection of Biodiversity Information – Kevin Hall (Environment Agency)*

KH outlined the Environment Agencies (EA) strategy to collect long term data for UK BAP species (see tabled handout). The EA proposes to set up an implementation strategy to ensure they are meeting the UK BAP targets for which they are lead partners, as well as other species on which the water industry has an impact. This will be achieved through identifying which organisations are already collecting information, how those data are stored, selecting which data they need and finding gaps in this information. From here species could be prioritised depending on how much work is already been carried out on them and where there is still a dearth of information (such as water vole and mink) to then implement the strategy and undergo collaborative projects and original research.

JB noted that two of the EAs UK BAP species, otters and water vole, are covered in the TMP riparian species focus group, for which it would be useful to have an EA representative. KH and RW to decide who will attend the various focus groups.

8. *Update on the Surveillance and Monitoring Programme*

Progress reports on:

Breeding Bird Survey (David Noble - BTO).

Summer survey only. Annual analysis of the mammal data is being carried out under a contract with JNCC. The coverage is relatively stable with 2200 squares distributed about GB and volunteers supply information from 1800 squares on any mammal they see during BBS. For dead mammals and field signs there is a separate piece of analysis that will be carried out in the near future.

DNA Library

JB provided an update on the work being carried out by Gareth Jones, Bristol University. Reasonable sample sizes have now been collected for the bat species DNA sequencing and the analysis is due to be completed by the end of April 2004. A report will be produced soon.

English House Condition Survey – (Dave Cowan CSL).

The 1996 published report was circulated by JB prior to the meeting. The EHCS is a standardised, random survey carried out by environmental health officers. Results show that the overall percentages of dwellings that were infested were 1.8% for mice, 0.4% for indoor rats and 1.7% for outdoor rats. Infestation rates were generally higher in rural

locations. A repeat survey was carried out in 2002, a report of which will be available soon, and it is planned that a subset of this sample will be surveyed annually to start looking into genuine trends. This is an England only survey and it is not certain if there is a similar assessment being carried out in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales.

Action 11. JB to look into HCS in other countries.

Garden Mammal Surveys

1) Living with Mammals (Valerie Keeble - MTUK). This is the second year of the survey that collects data on mammals in gardens and non-garden built up areas that started on the 1st April 2003. 4000 survey packs have been sent out this year and will again include a section to record sampling effort as this proved successful in the previous year's survey. A report was circulated by JB prior to the meeting.

2) Mammals in your Garden? (Georgette Shearer -TMS) This survey first ran in 2002 but missed a year because of TMS move to new offices. Hopefully this survey will be re-instated this year, now TMS has employed a surveys co-ordinator.

3) Garden Bird Watch (David Noble- BTO) A self-funding garden bird survey that collects incidental mammal data. 4500 datasheets with mammal information have been returned in 2004, with a further 2000 web entries. A BTO Research report will be published soon.

Mammals on Roads (Paul Bright – MTUK/RHUL).

This pilot survey was re-run in the autumn of 2003 with 1300 participants sampling approximately 100 000 miles of road. These journeys have not all been geo-coded as yet but there is work being carried out on developing an automated way to remove duplicate surveys of the same road. There is also power analysis to carry out and a final report is planned the end of 2004. A newsletter has been produced and circulated to the volunteers and was also circulated at the meeting.

National Bat Monitoring Programme (Colin Catto - BCT).

CC distributed a handout detailing graphs of bat species population trends. The NBMP has been running for 7 years now and the consecutive years data are beginning to show patterns and trends, especially for Daubenton's bats that are 'almost significantly increasing'. A pilot was carried out on a car based survey last year in Ireland which was very successful and a report has been produced. CC is hoping to test the methods in the UK and start a project with regional funding. Additionally BCT are collaborating with English Nature on a project to look at UK BAP species on designated sites – Bechstein's, barbastelle and lesser horseshoe bats. BCT are also looking at securing funding for a feasibility study on barbastelle surveillance, using bat detector transects and setting up a partnership with University of East Anglia to carry out GIS work on the BCT datasets.

National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (Paul Bright - MTUK/RHUL/EN).

The data from last years survey has not been updated into the database as yet, but the number of dormouse positive sites is now 180, an increase of 20 from the previous year. The Dormouse Monitor was produced and circulated to the volunteers.

National Game Bag Census (JB on behalf of GCT).

A scoping study has been carried out addressing some of the biases in the dataset and the potential to use the long-term data of the NGC for monitoring. A report on the scoping study has been produced and circulated to all the TMP. The results are very promising and JNCC now has a Partnership Agreement with GCT to develop the NGC and provide annual data analysis of the dataset. If there are any questions or comments please pass these on to JB to forward to GCT.

National Otter Surveys (JB on behalf of country agencies, EA, SEPA, EHS).

The fourth survey at country level has been completed in England and the report has been published. In Wales the survey has been completed and a report will be published soon. In Scotland half the sites have been surveyed the rest will be completed in 2004, with a report proposed for the following year. In Northern Ireland the survey has been completed and the report will be published as soon as some technicalities have been sorted out. Once all the data from all the surveys have been collated electronically they will be passed on to JNCC to be made publicly available through the NBN Gateway. Funding for future national surveys has not been secured at present.

RW noted that a long running survey of chemical analysis of otter RTAs will continue to be funded under a different EA department. A report on the results of the analysis will be coming out by the end of 2004 and will be circulated to the group.

Winter Mammal Monitoring (David Noble - BTO).

The report for the second year of this pilot will be revised and incorporated into the final report this summer. This report will be extremely detailed because it is providing the full results of a three year pilot scheme. However summaries of the survey information will be placed on the BTO and TMS websites prior to publication of the full report.

Water Shrew Survey (Georgette Shearer - TMS).

GS noted that the water shrew survey did not comply with all the TMP criteria for inclusion in the programme. However, it was agreed that as a new pilot survey, covering a very under-recorded species, it should be included as part of the programme. The survey is funded by EA and is being launched in 2004. The survey packs have already been circulated to volunteers and the aim is to get people to undertake 2 field surveys a year for a 2 year period.

Action 12. ALL – Circulate to the Steering group all survey reports that are relevant either in hard copy or advise where to download them.

DN queried what regional parameters BCT use for their survey work and whether it was the same as BTO? CC stated that they do use BTO boundaries or country boundaries depending on funding bodies. It is often better to start surveying species at a regional scale to build up to a national data set.

It was agreed that there needs to be some consistency in regional stratification in TMP surveillance schemes. Both political and biological regions were important. DN stated that BTO use the political regions that are detailed on the Defra website for England which provides a useful stratification for sample collection particularly if there are multiple funding bodies.

JBR stated that for these purposes Wales is generally treated as one region and this would be a sensible approach for future surveys. This was considered to be a sensible approach for NI as well.

The regional divisions for Scotland were not known.

It was agreed that the political regions should be used as well as the county divisions, because funding is often accessed at the regional level. There should also be biologically meaningful divisions and Environmental Zones seemed to be the most appropriate.

Action 13. DS – Send details of Defra political regions to JB and the rest of the group including a URL with maps. Also investigate how Scotland divides up into political regions and forward information. DS to also check regional divisions for NI and Wales.

Action 14. ALL – decide whether these regions are useful and workable for the respective surveys and programmes and pass comment to JB as soon as possible. JB to circulate information on Environmental Zones to all.

9. AOB

Other updates:

JBR stated that the Deer Initiative deer and collisions research has been updated on the website and shows how web based data entry is very useful for volunteers.

TJ highlighted that a new version of the NBN Gateway will be launched formally in May, but will be switched on sooner so members can gain access to the new version prior to this date.

The BCT has compiled a report on behalf on the EA on Bats as Indicators (Daubenton's).

Action 15. RW to send a copy to all group members either hard copy (preferably) or a URL to download. JB to investigate putting the report on the TMP website.

Consultations:

JB, as TMP coordinator, is the main contact point for people to send out consultation documents as for example a recent deer management consultation where JB replied on behalf of JNCC regarding the lack of monitoring. JB requested a decision on how the TMP should pass comment on these consultations. SH summarised saying that the group is clear that the role of the TMP is to collect surveillance and monitoring data, thus JB has a clear role that has been agreed by the group, and if there is a monitoring issue in a consultation process JB should pass comment on that aspect on behalf of the partnership.

CC noted that the bat conservation bodies are inundated with information that they are asked to comment on but often do not have the time. It may be helpful to have TMP representation at other meetings and groups. After discussion it was felt that it would be difficult for JB to represent all organisations for other aspects of their work, because of the diversity of objectives.

10. *Date and time of next meeting*

Wednesday October 6th 2004, 11.00am, MRC Meeting Rooms, Park Crescent, London. Valerie Keeble to chair.