



**Minutes of the Second Meeting of the  
Tracking Mammals Partnership Steering Group,  
MRC Meeting Rooms, Park Crescent, London  
6<sup>th</sup> October 2004**

***Those present:***

Jessa Battersby, TMP Co-ordinator (JB)  
Clare Bowen, PTES (CB)  
Paul Bright, RHUL (PB)  
Jackie Brinton, DI (JBR)  
Caitriona Carlin, EN (CCA)  
Colin Catto, BCT (CC)  
Dave Cowan, CSL (DC)  
Tony Dalby-Welsh, BDS (TDB)  
Melanie Hardie, JNCC (MH)  
Trevor James, NBN (TJ)  
Valerie Keeble, PTES (VK) Chair  
Ian McLean, JNCC (IM)  
John Milburne, EHS (JM)  
David Noble, BTO (DN)  
Jonathon Reynolds, GCT, (JR)  
Nigel Sharp, NAW (NS)  
Georgette Shearer, TMS (GS)  
Debbie Smith, DEFRA (DS)  
Roger Trout, FC (RT)  
Richard Walmsley, EA (RW)  
David Wembridge, PTES & MTUK (DW)

**1. *Apologies***

Mairi Cole (SNH), Christina Buesching (WildCRU ), Stephen Harris (BU ), Matt Heydon (DEFRA), David Macdonald (WildCRU), Jean Matthews (CCW), Chris Newman, (WildCRU ), Robert Raynor (SNH).

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## **2. Minutes of previous meeting, SG1.6**

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. An update later in the agenda will cover the website issues

Action 2. As above

Action 3. Done, again website issues will be addressed later in the agenda

Action 4, 5 & 6. Will be discussed later in the agenda

Action 7. Will be discussed later in the agenda

Action 8. These issues will be covered when discussing the report.

Action 9 & 10. Carried over until the report has been completed

Action 11. Done. NS advised JB that there is a HCS in Wales, but there are not any data on commensal rodents currently available. JB has still to investigate whether Scotland or NI undertake this type of survey.

Action 12. Done in part, several reports will be published shortly and those responsible have been asked to circulate to the group. All agreed to send a minimum of one hard copy of each report on work carried out under the TMP to each of the partner organisations.

Action 13. Done

Action 14. To be discussed later in the agenda

Action 15. In hand

## **4. Co-ordinator's report**

### **New Members**

Queens University, Belfast sent a formal request to join the TMP and provided information on the academic faculty and the wide range of mammal work that had been undertaken by the QUB mammal group. It was agreed by consensus that Queen's University should be invited to join the TMP and contribute information to the first TMP report.

**Action Point 1. JB to write a letter of invitation to Dr Robbie McDonald to attend the next SG meeting on behalf of QUB.**

### **Focus Group Meetings**

*Riparian Mammals and Mustelids Focus Group.* Met on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2004 with a wide representation of organisations and expertise. Species to be covered in this group include: otter, water vole, pine marten, mink, stoat, weasel, polecat, feral ferret and, post-hoc, the

Scottish wildcat after it was agreed that this species did not fit well in the other focus group.

Main decisions: The group agreed that the National Otter Surveys should be continued on the current 7-yearly cycle, but in the future should specifically include mink. Additionally WBBS squares could be specifically searched for presence of otter and mink. The wider use of mink rafts and latrine tiles was discussed for future surveys and having two volunteers per site to monitor otters and water voles separately.

*Small Mammals and Single Species Focus Group.* Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004 with a wide range of organisations represented. The list of species was agreed: Common, pygmy, lesser and greater white-toothed shrews; bank, field and Orkney voles; yellow-necked, harvest and wood mouse; brown rat; common dormouse & fat dormouse. There was a lengthy discussion on the possible methods to use to survey for small mammals, including the use of owl pellet surveys, which JB has reservations about. JB and MH are to draw up proposals for suggested survey methods and produce an action plan for monitoring this group of species.

*The Second Deer Focus Group* meeting was cancelled due to limited availability of representatives. However BDS are proceeding with the National Deer Distribution Survey, to commence in January 2005 and BDS and CSL are working jointly to access funding and prepare for an annual surveillance scheme to commence in 2006.

A point of interest raised from the small mammal focus group was whether or not the TMP should include the Channel Islands. All agreed that it should.

CC queried why Daubenton's bat was not included in the list of species in the Riparian and Mustelids Focus (RMFG) Group and it was agreed that BCT should be included on the RMFG.

JB advised that the minutes of all FG meetings would shortly be available on the TMP website.

## **Website**

MH updated the group on planned changes to the management of the JNCC, and therefore, the TMP websites. A substantive overhaul of the JNCC website and software is taking place and no further additions can be placed on the live site until work has finished in early December, if all goes according to plan. Once the new software is in place it will be a much quicker process to place new information on the site. However, all links from the partner's websites to any of the TMP pages, except [www.jncc.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.gov.uk) and [www.trackingmammals.org](http://www.trackingmammals.org) URLs, will be broken. MH asked all partners to provide an email address of their organisation's webmaster so that when the links are broken the new URLs can be emailed immediately.

**Action Point 2. ALL to send email contact details of their organisation's webmaster to MH at [melanie.hardie@jncc.gov.uk](mailto:melanie.hardie@jncc.gov.uk) before 30<sup>th</sup> November 2004.**

## Co-ordinators work programme

- 1 **TMP report** Work is on-going and will be discussed in detail later in the agenda.
- 2 **Draft Volunteers Management Guidance** This has been sent out to all the partners, and there has been interest from the NBN Trust who would like to publish it. JB is looking into publishing on the website, and possibly in hard copy.
- 3 **Contracts** A data entry contract for an online data management system is ongoing with collaboration between PTES, BCT, TMS and JNCC.  
PTES and JNCC are shortly to let a contract for a scoping study to set-up a red squirrel surveillance scheme across the UK. There had been some delays in letting the contract because of the need to extend the contract period to 2007 in order to incorporate two field seasons.  
JNCC and BTO are setting-up an ongoing contract for annual analysis of the BBS mammal data.
- 4 **Workshops & Events.** EHS and TMP are running a joint workshop in NI, on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2004, with the aim of improving links with mammal interest organisations in NI and increasing species coverage. It promises to be a well attended event and thanks to EHS for offering to cover travel and accommodation costs for the NGO speakers from GB. GS also reminded everyone of The Mammal Society Symposium that is being held at the end of November, with many of the TMP organisations providing speakers. TJ also alerted people to an NBN conference on the 19<sup>th</sup> November on 'Data Quality' aimed at recording societies and schemes.

## Volunteer and Database Sub-Group

This group has not met for over a year, and when JB canvassed for interest in restarting the group only 3 partners expressed an interest. JB pointed out that as the partnership grows and we try to align the different surveys to be more standardised, allowing between scheme comparisons, this group could be very useful. There were quite a number of issues involving volunteer and database management that would be more appropriately discussed in that group, rather than the Steering Group. JB would like to reinstate the group to meet at the beginning of 2005. It was felt that managing volunteers and data were quite separate issues and perhaps there should be two groups, but it was decided that there should be one group but the two sets of issues could be discussed separately. Those who registered their interest in this group were: BTO, BCT, PTES, TMS, BDS, DI. GCT.

TJ pointed out that data quality is now a big issue for the NBN and so would recommend that a representative of NBN attended the meetings, but not the volunteer side of it. CC suggested arranging the meeting so that it was split into two slots for the volunteer and data management aspects, (possibly am/pm) to allow people to attend the session they need to.

**Action point 3. JB to arrange the next VDSG meeting for early 2005**

## **5. TMP report (SG 2.2 Discussion document)**

### **Discussion focused on the final chapter of the report -Chapter 5 - Future Directions, the Tables in that chapter and the summary leaflet**

JB sent out the first draft of the report in August, which excluded chapters on volunteer involvement and future directions. A draft of the Future Directions chapter was circulated prior to this meeting.

After some discussion all agreed on the approach JB and JNCC have taken on the structure and comprehensive style of the report. JB briefly went through the chapters and possible additions and explained the rationale for using 1995 as the time point for assessing historic and current trends. It was agreed that 1995 was a sensible cut-off point.

### **Overall trends table**

RT expressed some concern over the accuracy of the headline figures that the media may draw from the report, and felt it was important to ensure the credibility of the data presented. TDW added that it was important to ensure that all the available data were considered when producing species trends.

**Action Point 4. All to ensure that JB is presented with all relevant data so that the report is credible and accurate.**

JR suggested adding a reliability coding for population trends, but for this the criteria for the reliability coding would need to be agreed. JR also suggested adding the word 'Apparent' to the title of the population change tables and ensure that surveys were measured from the same baseline point (1995). JB requested that for the longer running surveys trend analysis should be divided into pre and post 1995. This would affect the GCT analysis, but possibly other surveys such as the NDMP and the otter surveys.

There was some discussion on information concerning changes in distribution, which was noted in the first chapter of the report as one of the main aims of the TMP. JB pointed out that there was still very little accurate information on changes in species distribution, but that the final chapter of the report had a section examining ways of using the existing data to estimate species distribution and changes in distribution over time.

**Action Point 5. All to send comments on the tables and future directions chapter to JB to incorporate into final draft.**

### **Costs and funding**

The cost implications, the cover design and the various options as set out in SG2.2 for the main report were discussed. All agreed with JB's recommended option for layout and digital colour printing of the report. JB noted that funding provision from JNCC and additional money from English Nature should cover the cost of producing the report. However, the cost of producing the 4 sided A4 colour leaflet, to be distributed to

members and volunteers, should be covered by the other partner organisations. There was general agreement on this with most organisations offering to contribute several hundred pounds; the exact amount from each organisation was to be agreed when the cost of leaflet production was confirmed.

VK highlighted the need for research into the lightest paper and best way to produce this to ensure it can be added into current mail-outs of the organisations without additional costs.

There was some discussion over report distribution and it was felt that this could be through JNCCs usual distributors, NHBS, but this was considered an expensive option. CC suggested Alana Ecology (<http://www.alanaecology.com/>) as an alternative option.

5 free copies of the report would be provided to each of the partner organisations.

**Action point 6. JB to find out exact cost of leaflet production (for varying numbers 40-60,000) and inform all organisations who expressed a willingness to contribute towards the cost. This to be done as soon as possible because of the funding commitment of some organisations for this financial year.**

**Action Point 7. ALL who need to get confirmation of their organisation's ability to donate funding towards leaflet production, inform JB of decision by 8th November 2004.**

**Action point 8. All to consider the issues of report distribution and advise JB of any possible alternatives to NHBS.**

## **Timetable**

SG2.2 set out the proposed timetable to enable publication of the report at the end of February 2005. There was some concern over the tight schedule.

JB suggested setting up a small editorial group to help finalise the report, agree text and aid in writing the leaflet. The group could also look into ideas for the launch of the report in 2005. The nominated group members were BCT, PTES, TMS, JNCC, EN, DI.

## **Further requirements**

JB noted the list of requirements from each organisation outlined in SG 2.2 and pointed out that it was essential that all organisations note what was required and provide the information to JB as soon as possible.

In addition JB requested some information on the estimated costs of the different surveys to be added to the report. There was some concern expressed because unfair comparisons might be made on costings calculated in very different ways and the exact information required or why the information was needed was not clear. JB felt that it need only be an estimate, but this was the sort of information that should be included, at some level, in the

report. JBR pointed out that when put in context of the final chapter, and aimed at potential funders, the money currently spent on mammal surveillance should highlight the value for money that is being achieved, and if given more financial support then the TMP could accomplish so much more.

It was agreed that at least a figure on mammal surveillance for each of the countries could be put into the report.

**Action Point 9. ALL organisations running surveillance schemes to provide JB with an idea of annual running costs for their survey. If possible calculate the cost in each country and UK total and an estimate of the number of volunteer hours. Consensus to be obtained on the level of cost information to be included in the report.**

## **6. *Update on the Surveillance and Monitoring Programme***

Progress reports on:

### **BBS Mammals**

1995 – 2002 report will soon be published showing population trend analysis for 13 species. An annual contract is being set up to update the analysis each year.

### **WBBS**

The survey is run by BTO and funded by EA and has been operating since 1998. As with the BBS volunteers also collect data on a variety of mammals. JNCC commissioned a report scoping the ability of this survey to deliver population trend information for a number of mammal species. The report is at the first draft stage and indications are that this could be a good method for annual surveillance of riparian mammals, otter, water vole and mink. The report should be available in the next couple of months on the TMP website.

### **BDS**

The deer distribution survey protocol has been agreed, and survey packs sent to England and Wales in October 2004, and Scotland (November 2004) for the start date in January 2005 (to be completed by December 2005) and will cover every 10km<sup>2</sup> in the UK. In addition to this there will be a density/trends survey planned for 2006-2009 in cooperation with CSL. Funding options are currently being assessed and a detailed proposal will be produced shortly.

### **GMS**

Delayed until next summer.

### **LWM**

Now in its second year, the data for this year (April – June) are being analysed and a report will be published by the end of 2004.

## **MoR**

The 2004 season has now finished with over 400 surveyors taking part, 10% of which entered the data on line, which looks like a positive way forward in the future. A report will be published in spring 2005 and a final report for the programme by June 2005.

PTES will be continuing to fund and run this survey for at least an extra year.

NBMP – 2004 data from the existing surveys are being compiled. Results from the pilot Barbastelle transects survey look very promising, suggesting this might be an effective monitoring method for this species. Next year BCT will be looking into surveying new woodlands. Also BCT undertook a car survey, 350 miles were driven in Hertfordshire collecting bat recordings and the data were sent to the local BRC. The NBMP report, with JB suggestions, will be up-dated and circulated in the next couple of weeks.

## **NDMP**

The coverage has been expanded with over 200 new sites. Results from the survey show a continued decline in population trends, particularly in the west and marginal uplands.

## **NGC**

Since the report assessing the NGC as a surveillance scheme was produced, a summary on all mammals covered by the NGC has been placed on the GCT website. Currently the grid references for the shooting estates are being added to the data, however this is proving to be a time consuming process, complicated by the historical data. As an update to the table JB produced, JR informed the group that recent analysis had shown an increase in the number of roe deer bags.

## **Otter Surveys**

England and Wales otter survey reports have been produced, the survey in Scotland will be completed this year and a report on the NI otter survey is due out shortly. Plans for the next series of surveys (2007/8) need to be drawn up, indicating how they will be managed, funded etc. Additionally otter road kill data have been compiled. JR queried whether mink could also accumulate pesticide residues and hence be used in addition to otters to monitor this, being more widespread. RW to consider.

## **WMM**

The first draft of this report will be completed next week. There will not be any field work this winter, but the survey might be resumed in 2005, providing funding can be secured.

## **7. AOB**

### **Other updates**

JM informed the group that a report on the Irish hare survey has just been produced (and available on the EHS website [www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk)) in which a six-fold increase from 2002-2004 has been recorded.

JB questioned how the NI otter survey publication might be speeded up so that the data and distributional information could be included in the TMP report. JM suggested JB applied pressure directly to EHS Director.

**Action Point 10. JM to send JB contact details of JM Director.**

**8. *Date and time of next meeting***

**Wednesday October 5<sup>th</sup> 2005, 11.00am. MRC Meeting Rooms, Park Crescent, London.**

**David MacDonald, Chris Newman or Christina Buesching from WildCRU to chair.**