

# UK SPA SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

## MEETING 2001/1

1<sup>ST</sup> NOV 2001

11.15 - 15.15: Great Minster House, London

### Approved Minutes

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#### Present (around table):

Ian Bainbridge (IB) (Chair) – SEERAD  
Helen Baker (HB) (Secretary) - JNCC  
Trevor Salmon (TS) – DEFRA  
Geoff Audcent (GA) – DEFRA  
Sian Whitehead (SW) - CCW  
Nicola Donlon (ND) – NAW  
Jill Thomas (JT) – NAW  
Chris Spray (CS) – Water UK  
Gwyn Williams (GW) – RSPB

James Robinson (JR) – WWT  
Ben Fraser (BF) – EN  
Peter Clement (PC) – EN (from 11.55)  
David Stroud (DAS) – JNCC  
David Smallshire (DS) – DEFRA  
Nigel Buxton (NB) – SNH  
Richard Gregory (RG) – RSPB  
Don Morrissey (DM) – ABP Research  
Andrew Clarke (AC) – NFU (to 13.10)

#### Apologies:

Tanya Olmeda-Hodge (Country Land & Business Association)  
Ian Enlander (DOENI)  
Dave Burges (WWF - on behalf of Wildlife & Countryside Link)  
Jeremy Wilson (RSPB - on behalf of Scottish Environment Link)

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## 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1. The chair welcomed all representatives to this inaugural meeting of the UK SPA Scientific Working Group (SWG).
- 1.2. Conduct of the Group was agreed: business would be brisk, and would approximate to Chatham House Rules. Open minutes of a summary type will be produced. All representations would be made through the existing representatives, but it was recognised that some sectors are under-represented and may be invited to attend in future, e.g. forestry.
- 1.3. The role of the Group is solely scientific and will not include policy discussions. Policy issues will be dealt with in a separate forum; the *UK Natura 2000 NGO Liaison Group* (see item 4). However, it was recognised that the Group would have to deal with 'grey areas' from time to time and seek guidance if necessary.

## 2. Apologies (see above)

## 3. Summary of the UK SPA review process and outcome

- 3.1. DAS explained a brief history of the SPA review process to the Group. The review was presented to the EC in July 2001 and published on the JNCC website in Sep 2001. It will be printed in hard copy in Nov 2001.

3.2. The review process and subsequent consultations with NGOs have identified issues that could not be addressed within the review itself and it is these issues that will be the focus of this Group.

#### **4. The role and Terms of Reference for the Group**

4.1. TS outlined the role and Terms of Reference of the Group.

4.2. It is acknowledged that it is necessary for future consideration of Natura issues to be within an open forum and for this reason it is clear that the current Group will operate as such.

4.3. This Group will sit within a cluster of fora for the consideration of Natura issues: bilateral discussions between NGOs and the Country Agencies, the *UK Natura 2000 NGO Liaison Group* and the *UK Natura 2000 Steering Group* (see Framework for future update of UK SPA network – Annex to the draft Terms of Reference (DEFRA 13/9/01 [paper SWG01/1.1])). The SWG will provide advice and recommendations to each of these fora as well as acting on issues identified by them. It is possible that in the future it may consider issues relating to SACs.

4.4. The *UK Natura 2000 NGO Liaison Group* is to be established by DEFRA – invitations to potential representatives will be sent out during Nov 2001. Its role will be to discuss policy issues relating to both SPAs and SACs.

4.5. The draft Terms of Reference (DEFRA 13/9/01 [paper SWG01/1.1]) were accepted without amendment, although the following concerns were raised:

4.5.1. It was recognised that some NGOs may be able to make less contribution to scientific discussions over rationale and choice of sites due to the nature of their organisations. Major concerns for some land-use NGOs include the impacts of designation on land-use potential. On a scientific basis understanding the definitions of terms like ‘favourable conservation status’, ‘significance’, etc. are an important area. While some of these concerns are policy issues, and local issues will be discussed through bilateral meetings with the Country Agencies, there is recognition that discussion of relevant generic technical issues within the SWG may identify valuable areas of further work.

4.5.2. Data and policy issues are intimately linked and ‘grey areas’ do occur. In such circumstances the SWG will be able to give scientific views and recommendations to the Natura Liaison and Steering Groups for their consideration in dealing with them.

4.6. It was confirmed that despite the differing nature of each NGO represented, all representatives have the potential to contribute scientific expertise to the working of the Group.

4.7. Tackling of some issues may require smaller groups from the SWG to operate as the Group sees fit, with these sub-groups reporting back to the SWG.

## **5. Confirmation of the issues outstanding from the 2001 SPA Review, and prioritisation of those issues**

- 5.1. The UK SPA review (Volume 1, Section 4.7), consultation with NGOs, and future survey programs have influenced issues for future consideration.
- 5.2. Three reference papers were tabled to aid discussion: the Framework for future update of UK SPA network ['framework'; SWG01/1.1], the SPA Scientific Working Group Draft four month rolling work programme ['draft work programme'; SWG01/1.2], and SPA Scientific Working Group Outstanding Issues Identified by RSPB ['RSPB list'; SWG01/1.3]. All of the conservation NGOs support the issues raised in this last list.
- 5.3. The attached revised work programme was agreed ['revised work programme 1'; SWG01/1.4]. It identifies attributed actions and time scales for reporting, and should be referred to by Group members to determine the actions that each agreed to take. It also lists issues that the Group agreed would be placed on hold, or 'parked', for the foreseeable future (such issues will remain listed in the work programme).
- 5.4. In addition to the revised work programme some specific comments were made:
  - 5.4.1. Capercaillie – two new sites (Craigmore Wood and Morangie Forest) have been classified since publication of the review. There is a need for more data from other possible sites to be gathered over the next 1-2 years. Data in use are contemporary (include 2000).
  - 5.4.2. 'IBA vs SPA' boundaries – RSPB agreed to review in light of SPA review publication and prioritise site specific boundary issues. It was agreed that site specifics would be discussed in bilateral talks with the Agencies, but that any remaining unresolved would be discussed by the SWG.
  - 5.4.3. Stage 2 rejection - RSPB agreed to review in light of SPA review and take to bilateral discussions with Agencies. Outstanding specifics to come to SWG. Generic issue for Natura Liaison Group, including discussion of 1990 provisional targets (Stroud *et al.*).
  - 5.4.4. Sites no longer qualifying – two types: sites that have truly deteriorated due to inappropriate management, and sites that have lost populations due to external factors. Current advice from the Commission is that sites cannot be de-classified, but boundaries could be changed. Exactly how this is implemented will require further discussion with the Commission and is a long-term consideration for all SPA fora.
  - 5.4.5. Common Standards Monitoring (CSM) – it was agreed that the SWG should have an input into the development of CSM specifically for birds in SPAs. The SWG will ask JNCC to give a presentation to the Group on Site Conservation Objectives at a suitable future opportunity.
  - 5.4.6. Cropped habitats – the need for completion of two specific analyses was identified in order to inform further discussion of the suitability of cropped habitats for classification as SPAs. The first is to establish the approach taken

by other Member States. The second, to run in parallel, is to further identify species and cropped habitats to which further consideration should be given, data availability for these and the adequacy of data for identifying areas that may then be suitable for SPA classification.

## **6. Planning and dealing with new surveys and new data**

6.1. It was agreed that fuller discussion of this issue should be made at the next SWG meeting in Jan 2002.

## **7. Marine SPAs: the proposed timetable**

7.1. HB provided a very brief outline of the current work within JNCC and the Agencies to the Group. The work has three strands: developing guidelines for identifying extensions to breeding seabird colonies; developing guidelines for the identification of inshore marine areas for non-breeding waterbirds; and, developing options for identifying marine areas used as feeding areas by seabirds throughout the year. Each strand will produce guidelines/options in Mar 2002 for the identification of areas that may qualify for SPA classification in the marine environment. Reports from this work will be circulated to the SWG for consultation when completed.

7.2. A fuller briefing will be given at the next meeting of the SWG in Jan 2002.

## **8. AOB**

8.1. None.

## **9. Date and venue of next meeting**

9.1. The next meeting of the SWG will be on 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 2002, and will be in Wales [arrangements to be confirmed].

9.2. Beyond this, meetings are proposed for 13<sup>th</sup> Mar 2002 and 8<sup>th</sup> May 2002, at venues to be agreed.

### **Attachments:**

Revised Work Programme [SWG01/1.4]

Note on developing work to address SPA provision for passage species [DAS]

List of Members 2001