

# UK SPAR SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

## MEETING 19<sup>th</sup> MAY 2010

11.30 – 16.30, Victoria Quay, Scottish Government, Edinburgh

### Approved Minutes

---

#### Attendees:

Ian Bainbridge – Chair (SNH)	Jim Reid (JNCC)
Ed Mountford – Secretariat (JNCC)	Kate Jennings (RSPB)
Andy Musgrove (BTO) (via video-link)	Nigel Buxton (SNH)
Andy Tully (Defra) (via video-link)	Richard Hearn (WWT) (via video-link)
Ant Maddock (JNCC)	Sarah Anthony (NE)
Bob Bryson (Scottish Government)	Sian Whitehead (CCW) (via video-link)
David Stroud (JNCC)	Simon Hopkinson (Defra) (via video-link)
Jeremy Wilson (Scottish Environment Link)	Steven Dora (Scottish Government)

#### Apologies:

Andrea Graham (NFU)	Ian Enlander (NIEA)
Claire Collyer (CLA)	Miranda Davis (Water UK)

---

### 1. Welcome, apologies and membership changes

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked Scottish Government for hosting it. Introductions were given and apologies received (see above). Sarah Anthony was welcomed as the new representative for Natural England. Bob Bryson attended as part of the host organisation. No news had been received on a replacement for Phil Alcock as the Scottish Government Marine Policy Officer. It was agreed that David Mallon should be asked about this situation.

**Action Point 1 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to ask David Mallon about a replacement for Phil Alcock as the Scottish Government Marine Policy Officer.

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1. Draft minutes of the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010 SPAR SWG meeting were tabled. These were approved (subject to one minor amendment) and the Secretariat was asked to publish the finalised version on the SWG webpage.

**Action Point 2 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to publish the finalised version of the minutes of the meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010 on the SWG webpage.

### 3. SPA Review – BTO contract in support of Phase 1

- 3.1. BTO (Andy Musgrove) provided an update on the contract work being undertaken for Defra and JNCC. A spreadsheet had been circulated prior to the meeting.

This had been discussed at a meeting of the Project Steering Group on 11<sup>th</sup> May. It contained the first tranche of biogeographic, UK and GB bird population data for the SPA Review. Data for most of the 43 species involved were included. A series of issues were set out for SWG to advise on during the meeting, and, if necessary, via email subsequently.

**Action Point 3 (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send additional comments on the population/site-level data issues raised by BTO to Andy Musgrove (cc: Ant Maddock) by end of June 2010.

- 3.2. BTO asked whether there were any additional general concerns / issues. SNH asked how easily the GB/UK population estimates could be sub-divided on a country basis, and whether such information could be made available. BTO said that for some species this could be done quite easily, but for others the data was not divided by country. This was beyond the scope of the Defra contract specification. It was pointed out that such subdivision was not necessary for the current SPA Review. It was agreed that BTO and JNCC would consider this proposal further and then liaise with relevant statutory Country Agency representatives.

**Action Point 4 (19/05/10):** BTO and JNCC to consider the proposal to provide country population estimates and then liaise with relevant statutory Country Agency representatives.

- 3.3. BTO asked whether members were content with the spreadsheet column headings and the format of the data. No concerns were raised. It was agreed that BTO should continue to liaise with JNCC, independently of SWG, as regards the content and format of any spreadsheets or databases that will hold population and site-level data being collected by BTO.
- 3.4. BTO asked how Isle of Man (IoM) populations should be treated when determining overall GB/UK population estimates. In the 2001 SPA Review IoM populations appears to have been excluded, in contrast to APEP2 where they were mostly included. In most instances, the inclusion of the IoM makes little difference to the overall estimate. Treatment of IoM populations is to be noted in the 'Notes' column of the spreadsheet, along with the IoM estimate (where known). SWG advised that IoM population data should be excluded for SPA Review purposes where this is easy to do or where their inclusion would significantly affect the overall estimate. However, IoM population data may be required for APEP updating and Ramsar. SWG agreed that the treatment and size of IoM population data needs to be systematically recorded in the spreadsheet.
- 3.5. BTO asked for advice on determining population estimates for species that: (i) have annual population survey data available; and (ii) show a consistent year-on-year decline or increase in size over the time period being considered. Estimates for such populations have previously been based on the overall mean. It would, however, seem more appropriate to use the value from the last year of the time series. In some cases, the situation is confounded as an upward or downward trend is apparent in, for example, four out of the five years under consideration. SWG agreed that in such cases it would generally be better to use the value from the last year, but that sometimes the decision may not be entirely clear-cut. They asked BTO to make an initial decision on where this approach seemed appropriate and to flag-up up such instances in the spreadsheet, so that a final decision could be reached on each population in due course. They also asked BTO to draw-up a guidance note to explain where this approach had been

adopted and the rationale for it, recognising that it should include a degree of pragmatism. It was suggested that this might be informed by an analysis of the difference between the value in the last year and the overall mean – a threshold could then be set, above which this approach would apply.

**Action Point 5 (19/05/10):** BTO to draft a guidance note on determining population estimates for species showing a consistent or near-consistent year-on-year decline or increase, further to them making an initial decision on the species where this seems appropriate.

- 3.6. BTO asked about the treatment of passage population estimates. These are required to update Appendix 4 of the 2001 SPA Review, for species on certain Ramsar sites, and for APEP. Deciding how to determine passage estimates is often problematic. For biogeographic populations, passage estimates have normally been assumed to be the same as winter estimates, though certain exceptions might be considered. UK and GB passage estimates are only currently required for Little egret – in the 2001 SPA Review expert opinion was used, but for this Review it would be possible to use actual data. Several Ramsar species in Northern Ireland require all-Ireland passage estimates, but this is especially problematic as very little information is available. Therefore, in most cases the Irish passage estimates will be based on winter estimates on the basis that this represents the best available information. SWG acknowledged that there was no easy solution to this issue. They asked BTO to advise where no adequate passage estimate was available and where BTO thought that the preferred course of action should be to use the winter population estimate. This needs to be recorded in the spreadsheet, as it will form part of the Review audit trail.
- 3.7. BTO asked SWG to confirm that non-breeding Pochard had been incorrectly listed in the contract specification (and the SPA Review Terms of Reference) as a 'scarce species for which periodic national surveys have been undertaken since the 2001 review'. This was confirmed.
- 3.8. BTO asked about dealing with 'confirmed' vs. 'possible' pairs, typically for RBBP data. The notes in the spreadsheet column 'means of derivation' details the approach taken for each species populations. Generally the 2001 SPA Review has been followed and the estimate is based on the mean of the number confirmed pairs. However, there is some uncertainty over what constituted a 'confirmed pair'. SWG advised that the aim was to provide the best count of the total number of individuals in each population, not just the breeding component. The default position was to use the count of 'territorial' pairs. BTO agreed to proceed on this basis, but advised that it might throw-up some inconsistencies compared to the 2001 SPA Review. These would be flagged-up in the spreadsheet and SWG would take a decision on them then.
- 3.9. BTO asked for advice on how to treat estimates based on expert opinion that could be classified as 'rough guesstimates'. SWG advised that these should be identified as such under a 'data quality' column in the spreadsheet, as per APEP. If these guesstimates were considered too crude for the purpose of reviewing SPA suites, then this should be acknowledged.
- 3.10. BTO asked how SWG wanted to deal with the issue of determining population estimates for breeding waders. In particular, should the new 'BBS distance-analysis' approach of Newson et al (2008) or the original approach of O'Brien (2004) be used (or even a composite). Members were asked to send their views

to BTO after the meeting; BTO would ask Stewart Newson and JNCC would ask APEP and the Inter-Agency Ornithological Group for the same.

**Action Point 6A (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send their views to Andy Musgrove as regards establishing population estimates for breeding waders.

**Action Point 6B (19/05/10):** BTO to ask Stewart Newson the same.

**Action Point 6C (19/05/10):** JNCC to ask APEP and the Inter-Agency Ornithological Group the same.

- 3.11. BTO asked how to proceed with Nightjar site-level data, as this involves the location of virtually every individual churring male in the country pinpointed to an individual location. It was confirmed that aggregation of this data is for the statutory Country Agencies to do in Phase 2 of the Review. The RSPB advised that they had recently tackled this issue and will circulate their conclusions.

**Action Point 7 (19/05/10):** RSPB to circulate the conclusions of their work on aggregating Nightjar location data.

- 3.12. BTO advised that in certain cases confidentiality issues would affect accessibility and dissemination of site-level data. Location information for sites for certain rare birds will be withheld from most circulated versions of the spreadsheet. SWG will need to decide who will need to have full access to these data for further analyses, and this will need communicating to the data providers (generally RBBP, but potentially some raptor groups). This was understood and agreed.

#### **4. Framework to aid consistent review of SPA suites**

- 4.1. JNCC (David Stroud) updated on the progress made with development of a framework to aid the consistent review of SPA suites. As agreed at the last meeting, a sub-group had met and produced a further draft of the framework paper for consideration at this meeting. This demonstrated how closely intertwined the framework and the Site Provision Index are. The framework needs further elaboration and may prove useful to help develop thinking for the planned cropped habitats decision-tree, which forms part of the work to be undertaken by BTO. Members thought the framework was very useful and easy to follow, with no glaring omissions. They agreed that it needed further elaboration, to bring in the wider conservation context and particularly to consider other conservation measures not accommodated by the Site Provision Index. Members were asked to send their comments on the framework paper to David Stroud within two weeks. The sub-group would then progress the framework for consideration at the next SWG meeting, adding in the policy background and trialling it on some example species.

**Action Point 8 (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send comments on the 'framework to review species suites' paper to David Stroud by end of 4<sup>th</sup> June 2010 (cc: Ant Maddock).

**Action Point 9 (19/05/10):** DAVID STROUD and other sub-group members to further develop the 'framework to review species suites' framework for consideration at the next SWG meeting.

#### **5. Site Provision Index**

- 5.1. JNCC (David Stroud) updated on developments with the Site Provision Index (SPI). The planned questionnaire has been developed and widely circulated. The

aim of this is to provide an independent assessment of the extent to which SPI values might reflect suitability for site-based conservation. Respondee have been asked to assess what proportion of the national (GB) population of a species they would expect, on the basis of their best expert judgement, the UK SPA network to contain for a selection of Annex I and migratory species in both breeding and wintering seasons. Species were selected from a range of SPI values, from those where there would be an expectation of high population coverage within SPAs, to those where site-based conservation measures would be expected to contribute little to conservation given the species' ecology.

- 5.2. As at 13 May 2010, a total of 84 individuals had responded to the questionnaire, although only 53 had completed it. Further responses will be sought and then a full statistical analysis will be undertaken. The following preliminary conclusions are apparent from the data collected to date:
- there is broad agreement between a) expert judgements as to the extent to which a species would be expected to have high site-based (SPA) provision and b) the independent assessment of the same value by the Site Provision Index;
  - whilst there is 'no correct answer', the fact that two independent methods result in similar outcomes gives confidence in the value of the SPI as an objective means of assessing the extent of site-based conservation provision for a species;
  - assessments appear to be similar for breeding versus non-breeding, and Annex I versus migrant species;
  - an initial check shows no overall difference in assessments made by respondees from statutory agencies with those from NGOs (overall means for all species 43% vs. 42%).
- 5.3. Future plans include double checking the raw dataset and repeating the analyses, removing strongly colonial nesting species from the analysis, and assessing the relationship between the average 'Delphi values' against the actual proportions of species within the SPA network as reported by the 2001 SPA Review (it may eventually be necessary to use updated values from the BTO contract). In addition, the intention is to explore the production of an SPI based on a Principal Component Analysis of the original variables (rather than a simple index which adds sub-index component values) to better address the fact that many of the SPI components are quite highly correlated. The aim is to produce a formal paper on the SPI methodology and its possible value as a decision-support tool in the development of species-based targets for protected area networks. The intention is to bring a draft of this to SWG for comment as soon as possible.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.4. SWG discussed the possibility of running the SPI for roost versus feeding populations for certain species. It was suggested that views could be canvassed as regards acceptable limits for individual SPI values – the spread of data collected in the questionnaire might provide insights on this. It was pointed out that lumping of the components was, in some ways, undesirable, given that all of the current components could be clearly linked to the requirements of Article 4 of the Birds Directive. Suggested journals for publication included Biological Conservation, Journal of Applied Ecology and Oryx.

---

<sup>1</sup> Following the meeting, David Mallon and John Clorley submitted a note stating that, although they were not able to attend the SWG meeting, they wished it to be made clear that the Site Provision Index work had been developed from a terrestrial perspective. Only after a final view has been reached by the N2KR Standing Committee on its usefulness in that realm, would its potential applicability in the marine environment be considered, as one of a possible range of measures to ensure that the marine SPA suite is adequate

**Action Point 10 (19/05/10):** DAVID STROUD to complete work on the Site Provision Index and report back at the next SWG meeting.

## **6. Cropped habitats**

- 6.1. BTO advised that work on the cropped habitats decision-tree (under the Defra-JNCC contract) would begin in June 2010. The Chairman proposed that David Stroud meets BTO before work begins to explain the background, key issues and aims of this work, review work to date and identify the boundaries of the work required. David should invite other members to join the meeting as he felt necessary. The treatment of socio-economic factors and UK agri-environment schemes within the decision-tree needed to be carefully considered, because of the statutory requirements of the Birds Directive.

**Action Point 11 (19/05/10):** DAVID STROUD to meet with BTO to establish a platform for the cropped habitats work, including other members as necessary.

## **7. CHAINSPAN**

- 7.1. An update on the CHAINSPAN project had been circulated by BTO prior to the meeting. Specific enquiries should be addressed to James Pearce-Higgins of BTO. It was suggested that in future the best way of keeping SWG updated would be to circulate any internal CHAINSPAN project updates as these are produced. The Secretariat and BTO agreed to liaise over this issue.

**Action Point 12 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT and BTO agreed to liaise over updating on the CHAINSPAN project.

## **8. SPA web-information improvements and stock-take of progress with implementation of 2001 SPA Review recommendations**

- 8.1. JNCC provided an update on planned changes to improve and update the SPA species and site accounts as presented on the JNCC website. A paper detailing the changes was circulated before meeting. This work is required because 70 SPAs have been classified or re-classified subsequent to the publication of the 2001 SPA Review, affecting 85 out of 160 species accounts. At present, the web-information on SPA sites and species is confusing because it is available in two forms: (i) as per the 2001 SPA Review; and (ii) as per the official Natura data form. The plan is in future to simply present one set of information containing the latest information related to the legal qualification of each SPA. It is expected that the changes to the website can be made before the next SWG meeting.
- 8.2. JNCC also updated on the stock-take of progress with implementation of 2001 SPA Review, i.e. outstanding SPA (re)classification tasks in terms of sites and qualifying species. A paper detailing the findings was circulated before meeting. Only a small number of potential SPAs listed in the 2001 SPA Review have not yet been classified or have been only partially classified. There are, however, around 100 sites that have not yet been re-classified to take into account changes identified in the SPA Review. This means that there is a mismatch between the listed entities on the SPA citation (used as the basis for the Natura 2000 data form) and the 2001 SPA Review published documents (which are the basis for the SPA Review web pages). The number of species affected by this is around 100, some of which appear to be more important to act upon than others. JNCC offered some suggestions as regards prioritisation of this work.

- 8.3. SWG was generally content with the content of the above two papers and agreed to send any follow-up comments by end of June. SNH advised that they had recently been asked by the Scottish Government to provide advice on progressing outstanding SPA recommendations from the 2001 SPA Review. It was noted that previous work had been undertaken by the statutory Country Agencies as regards which type of qualifying species changes need to be consulted on. SWG asked about dealing with remaining errors in the JNCC database containing SPA information. JNCC advised that it did not intend to undertake any further systematic checking of these data, given that any remaining 'errors' are likely to be longstanding transcription errors from the SPA citations that have been undetected for several years. SWG asked if it could continue to be regularly updated on progress with the implementation of the 2001 SPA Review. They also asked if JNCC could provide further details of the information underpinning the table in Annex A of the 'SPA (re)classification tasks outstanding from the 2001 SPA Review' paper.

**Action Point 13 (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send any follow-up comments to JNCC (Dave Chambers, cc: David Stroud) by end of June 2010 regarding (i) the planned changes to the SPA species and site accounts (as presented on JNCC website); and (ii) the SPA (re)classification tasks outstanding from the 2001 SPA Review.

**Action Point 14 (19/05/10):** JNCC to advise on the treatment of remaining 'errors' in the JNCC SPA database and provision of additional information underpinning the table in Annex A of the 'SPA (re)classification tasks outstanding from the 2001 SPA Review' paper.

## 9. Process to update Ramsar Information Sheets

- 9.1. JNCC advised that they had not been able to deliver a short paper on the process to update Ramsar Information Sheets, but would do so within a few weeks via email.

**Action Point 15 (19/05/10):** DAVID STROUD to circulate information on the process to update Ramsar Information Sheets by end of July 2010.

## 10. Peer review of Phase 1 outputs

- 10.1. The Chair briefed SWG on the plans to 'peer review' the outputs of Phase 1 of the SPA Review. A paper had been circulated before the meeting that described the outputs from Phase 1 and showed the plans to peer review each of these. This issue had been raised by Defra, who wanted the outputs from Phase 1 to be scientifically robust and able to withstand any possible challenges. SWG was asked for its views and particularly whether any parts of Phase 1 appeared to be in need of further peer review and who might be suitable to undertake this.
- 10.2. SWG recognised that independent peer review was fundamental to the scientific approach. Any challenges that might arise from this should be seen positively: they would ultimately help justify the work and its conclusions. Although SWG will play an important role in reviewing and quality assuring the outputs from Phase 1, it is self-evident that SWG cannot claim to be entirely impartial in this matter. To strengthen the role played by SWG, it was suggested that non-attending members were contacted to get confirmation their support for the peer review plans. Given that the vast majority of relevant scientific and technical knowledge lay within the

'family' of organisations who are members of SWG, it was noted that the pool of peers with the required level of knowledge of the SPA Review, SPAs in general, and European bird ecology and monitoring would be limited.

- 10.3. There was some concern that any additional work may prolong the timetable for Phase 1, but this might be mitigated by early planning and timetabling. The scope of any additional peer review would need to be defined. SWG suggested that the components most likely to be open to scrutiny would be the Site Provision Index, the Cropped Habitats work and, possibly, the methods chosen to determine the population estimates. There was general agreement on the final Phase 1 publication being peer reviewed outside SWG.
- 10.4. It was concluded that this issue needed some additional consideration. JNCC were asked to develop the current plans further, to identify which outputs were most in need of independent peer review and who might undertake the work involved. Defra were asked to consider financing the work. It was also noted that SWG could go ahead with the work programme whilst any peer review was being undertaken.

**Action Point 16:** JNCC to develop a plan for external peer review of Phase 1 of the SPA Review in liaison with Defra.

## 11. Other SPA Review matters

- 11.1. JNCC thanked SWG for their work on Phase 1 of the SPA Review since the last meeting. They stressed how important it was to continue to progress work between meetings, so that deadlines were met and the Review is progressed as rapidly as possible.
- 11.2. As requested at the last meeting, the work plan for Phase 1 of the SPA Review has been uploaded onto the Internet using 'Google Docs'. This means that members can view updated versions of the work plan directly. An invitation to access the website will be circulated after the meeting. SWG welcomed this development.

**Action Point 17 (19/05/10):** ANT MADDOCK to invite members to access the work plan for Phase 1 of the SPA Review via 'Google Docs'.

- 11.3. It was confirmed that the species and data sources to be used to provide update population estimates at biogeographic and national levels had been approved by SWG. Members also confirmed they were largely content with the planned methods to update these estimates and the discussion that had taken place (see above). The main outstanding issue was the way in which breeding wader population estimates are to be determined.
- 11.4. SWG agreed to the following, slightly revised, timetable for the delivery of data by BTO. The compilation of the biogeographic/all-Ireland, GB and UK estimates for SPA Review species was virtually complete and SWG will be asked to approve this at their next meeting.

Revised timetable for delivery of population estimates and site-level data

Achieved	Step 1. Provide population and site-level data for a limited number of species covering a range of dataset types – including Crane (RBBP), Nightjar (SCARABBS), Bar-tailed Godwit (WeBS) – to enable methods to be developed whilst further data are being prepared.
Estimate for delivery by 8 <sup>th</sup> Sep 2010	Step 2. Provide biogeographic, all-Ireland, GB and UK population estimates for SPA Review species covered in column 2 of Appendix A of the contract specification. Step 3. Provide site-level data for SPA Review species covered in column 2 of Appendix A of the contract specification, to allow evaluation of the SPA suite for these species and for ECJ reports to be prepared. Step 4. Provide biogeographic, all-Ireland, GB and UK population estimates to allow updating of Ramsar Information Sheets.
Estimate for delivery at end Nov 2010	Step 5. Provide site-level data to allow for updating of Ramsar Information Sheets.
Estimate for delivery at end Jan 2011	Step 6. Provide GB and UK population estimates for all remaining species to enable subsequent production of APEP3.

## 12. 2008 & 2009 SWG Report

- 12.1. The Secretariat advised that the 2008 & 2009 SWG Report had been progressed as agreed at the last meeting. The latest draft version had been circulated before the meeting. SWG was largely content with this and it was agreed that any specific comments should be sent to the Secretariat by mid-June. A final version would then be circulated to seek approval from SWG.

**Action Point 18 (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send comments on the 2008 & 2009 SWG Report to Ed Mountford by end of 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

**Action Point 19 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to circulate revised version of the 2008 & 2009 SWG Report for approval by SWG.

## 13. Marine SPAs

- 13.1. JNCC (Jim Reid) updated on Marine SPA matters. The JNCC Marine SPA team has received another staff cut. This will have ramifications for the delivery of the work of identifying possible SPAs. The team work plan will need to be revised by reconsidering the delivery schedule and with some work possibly being dropped.

### *Inshore work*

- 13.2. The Outer Thames and Liverpool Bay pSPAs have gone through a lengthy consultation period. All classification paper work, including responses to consultation respondents, will be sent to Defra by 25 June 2010 to meet the October deadline of submission to the European Commission.
- 13.3. A report on seven areas, mainly on the eastern and northern Scottish coasts, was submitted to SNH in March; it includes details of the analyses and options for possible site boundaries in these areas. Further work may be required to refine

boundaries and select the most suitable territories from these seven areas. A similar report is scheduled for delivery in March 2011 on the remaining inshore areas of search in Scotland (west coast). If further work were to be required on the initial seven areas then this could be done concurrently with work on the western areas only if extra resources were to be found.

- 13.4. Only a small amount of aerial survey was planned for 2010/11 and this should see the end of the inshore survey programme.

#### *Offshore*

- 13.5. Now that General Election purdah had been lifted, the report containing results of the analyses of the ESAS offshore data could now be published and will be as soon as possible. Responses to the referees of the report have been drafted and again will be sent out as soon as fieldwork duties allow.
- 13.6. The JNCC Marine Protected Areas Committee Sub-Group has decided that possible options for offshore SPAs, based on an analysis of the European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) database, should be put on hold further to a consideration of the role of offshore SPAs and other UK seabird conservation measures.

#### *Colony extensions*

- 13.7. CCW is preparing Departmental Briefs for extensions to three seabird colony SPAs.

#### *Additional areas for terns*

- 13.8. An interim report on the first (of three) years of fieldwork was disseminated in December 2009. The second year's fieldwork is under way at several sites around the UK. Terns are being tracked (mainly visually) to determine their ranging behaviour and habitat use, for parameterising models that aim to identify the most suitable foraging sites during the breeding season. The second interim report due December 2010.

#### *Additional areas for breeding red-throated diver*

- 13.9. A JNCC Committee paper was due for September, but in the wake of staff cuts this may have to be revised or dropped. A possible solution using staff from another JNCC team is being considered.

#### *Additional areas for European shag*

- 13.10. A report on pilot analyses of shag tracking data from the Isle of May (part of the Forth Islands SPA) has been received from CEH. In it, important foraging areas have been identified and recommendations made for fieldwork at other colony SPAs. These resource-intensive recommendations, even without recent staff cuts, would be extremely challenging to fulfil.

#### *Balearic shearwater*

- 13.11. Further work on identifying a possible SPA for the Balearic shearwater outside the breeding season on the south coast of England had been suspended due to lack of funding. However, the species has re-emerged with NE as a possible target for an SPA and discussions between NE and JNCC will take place with a view to possibly re-establishing fieldwork, though possibly not before 2011.

## 14. Updates on country implementation

- 14.1. The statutory agency representatives provided brief updates on SPA implementation:
- CCW reported that they were still working with the RSPB on chough conservation issues.
  - SNH continue to have a large workload connected to Marine SPA implementation and indicated that the 2012 European Commission deadline for substantially completing the marine SPA network is likely to be compromised because of resource constraints. SNH are also progressing six Golden eagle pSPAs, having received about 250 responses from the recent consultation exercise. SNH have been asked by Scottish Government to provide advice on updating SPA qualifying species lists further to the 2001 SPA Review.
  - NE reported that the proposed extension to Dungeness SPA is being progressed and that new staff resources should be available for them to look at updating their SPA citations further to the 2001 SPA Review.

## 15. Progress with Action Points from last meeting

- 15.1. Progress with and follow-up to the agreed Action Points from the last SWG meeting (27/01/10) was reviewed. Action Points 1-2, 5, 6, 8-9, 11-12, 14, 16 and 18-21 had been completed. Action Points 3, 10 and 13 were progressing as agreed. Action Points 10 and 13 have been superseded by Action Points 9 and 10 (19/05/10). Action Point 3 (27/01/10) was carried forward.

**Action Point 20 (19/05/10):** JNCC to publish agreed statement on the status of 'qualifying' species on individual SPAs via the JNCC SPA web pages

- 15.2. Action Point 4 was discussed and it was agreed that the Secretariat should advise the SPA Review Executive Steering Group that it would be useful for this group to meet soon.

**Action Point 21 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to advise the SPA Review Executive Steering Group that it would be useful for this group to meet soon.

- 15.3. Action Point 7 had not been progressed and it was agreed to carry this forward.

**Action Point 22 (19/05/10):** JNCC (David Stroud) to form a sub-group to consider and advise on the proposed review of the Ramsar noteworthy species.

- 15.4. The Chair updated on Action Point 15. Having discussed the matter with Defra, it had been concluded that the best way of accommodating the suggested additional organisations / interest groups was to invite them to attend Natura 2000 & Ramsar Forum meetings. SNH and the Scottish Government both felt that not inviting the Forestry Commission to join SWG would be a serious omission. The Chair agreed to consult further with Defra.

**Action Point 23 (19/05/10):** CHAIR to consult further about inclusion of the Forestry Commission on SWG.

- 15.5. The Chair also updated on Action Point 17. Having considered the list of potential non-SPA Review items in the SWG work plan and recognising the workload

associated with the SPA Review, it was felt that no additional work areas should be progressed by SWG in the short-term.

## **16. Natura 2000 & Ramsar meetings**

16.1. The Secretariat advised that the Natura 2000 & Ramsar Forum is planning on meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010, and the Natura 2000 & Ramsar Steering Committee in early November 2010.

## **17. Next meeting**

17.1. The date and venue for the next SWG meeting was confirmed as 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at the JNCC Offices in Peterborough.

**Action Point 24 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to organise the next SWG meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at the JNCC Offices in Peterborough.

## UK SPAR SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP

### ACTION POINTS AGREED AT SWG MEETING 19/5/2010

**Action Point 1 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to ask David Mallon about a replacement for Phil Alcock as the Scottish Government Marine Policy Officer.

**Action Point 2 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to publish the finalised version of the minutes of the meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010 on the SWG webpage.

**Action Point 3 (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send additional comments on the population/site-level data issues raised by BTO to Andy Musgrove (cc: Ant Maddock) by end of June 2010.

**Action Point 4 (19/05/10):** BTO and JNCC to consider the proposal to provide country population estimates and then liaise with relevant statutory Country Agency representatives.

**Action Point 5 (19/05/10):** BTO to draft a guidance note on determining population estimates for species showing a consistent or near-consistent year-on-year decline or increase, further to them making an initial decision on the species where this seems appropriate.

**Action Point 6A (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send their views to Andy Musgrove as regards establishing population estimates for breeding waders.

**Action Point 6B (19/05/10):** BTO to ask Stewart Newson the same.

**Action Point 6C (19/05/10):** JNCC to ask APEP and the Inter-Agency Ornithological Group the same.

**Action Point 7 (19/05/10):** RSPB to circulate the conclusions of their work on aggregating Nightjar location data.

**Action Point 8 (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send comments on the 'framework to review species suites' paper to David Stroud by end of 4<sup>th</sup> June 2010 (cc: Ant Maddock).

**Action Point 9 (19/05/10):** DAVID STROUD and other sub-group members to further develop the 'framework to review species suites' framework for consideration at the next SWG meeting.

**Action Point 10 (19/05/10):** DAVID STROUD to complete work on the Site Provision Index and report back at the next SWG meeting.

**Action Point 11 (19/05/10):** DAVID STROUD to meet with BTO to establish a platform for the cropped habitats work, including other members as necessary.

**Action Point 12 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT and BTO agreed to liaise over updating on the CHAINSPAN project.

**Action Point 13 (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send any follow-up comments to JNCC (Dave Chambers, cc: David Stroud) by end of June 2010 regarding (i) the planned changes to the SPA species and site accounts (as presented on JNCC website); and (ii) the SPA (re)classification tasks outstanding from the 2001 SPA Review.

**Action Point 14 (19/05/10):** JNCC to advise on the treatment of remaining 'errors' in the JNCC SPA database and provision of additional information underpinning the table in Annex A of the 'SPA (re)classification tasks outstanding from the 2001 SPA Review' paper.

**Action Point 15 (19/05/10):** DAVID STROUD to circulate information on the process to update Ramsar Information Sheets by end of July 2010.

**Action Point 16:** JNCC to develop a plan for external peer review of Phase 1 of the SPA Review in liaison with Defra.

**Action Point 17 (19/05/10):** ANT MADDOCK to invite members to access the work plan for Phase 1 of the SPA Review via 'Google Docs'.

**Action Point 18 (19/05/10):** ALL MEMBERS to send comments on the 2008 & 2009 SWG Report to Ed Mountford by end of 11<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

**Action Point 19 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to circulate revised version of the 2008 & 2009 SWG Report for approval by SWG.

**Action Point 20 (19/05/10):** JNCC to publish agreed statement on the status of 'qualifying' species on individual SPAs via the JNCC SPA web pages

**Action Point 21 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to advise the SPA Review Executive Steering Group that it would be useful for this group to meet soon.

**Action Point 22 (19/05/10):** JNCC (David Stroud) to form a sub-group to consider and advise on the proposed review of the Ramsar noteworthy species.

**Action Point 23 (19/05/10):** CHAIR to consult further about inclusion of the Forestry Commission on SWG.

**Action Point 24 (19/05/10):** SECRETARIAT to organise the next SWG meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at the JNCC Offices in Peterborough.