

**UK SPAR SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP
MEETING 20 SEPTEMBER 2012**
10:30 – 15:30, JNCC, Peterborough

Final minutes

Present:

Ian Bainbridge, SNH (Chair)
Sarah Anthony, NE
Nigel Buxton, SNH
Richard Hearn, WWT
Kate Jennings, RSPB
David Stroud, JNCC
Ant Maddock, JNCC
Cherry-Ann Vickery, JNCC (minutes)

By video:

Kerstin Kober, JNCC
Matt Parsons, JNCC (standing in for Jim Reid)
Susan Haysom, SNH (for item 13)
Megan Towers, SNH: (for Item 13)
Richard Evans, RSPB (standing in for Jeremy Wilson)
Steven Dora, Scottish Government
Andy Tully, Defra
Sian Whitehead, CCW

Apologies:

Ian Enlander, NIEA
Charlotte Lay, CLA

Introduction and general matters

1. Welcome and apologies; matters for AOB; membership changes

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Introductions were given and apologies received.

It was noted that Charlotte Lay had taken over as the CLA rep, and that Simon Hopkinson was shortly to retire from Defra. SPAR SWG recorded their thanks to Simon for his work over the last four years. It was also noted that Chris de Grouchy had replaced Francis Marlow and would assume the Chair of the N2KRSC and the SPA Review ESG.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of 9 May 2012 were agreed subject to revision for clarity of Item 5.3.

Action 1. DS to amend the wording of the previous minutes, p4: 5.3 to provide clarity on future estimates.

Action 2. Secretariat, following revision of the minutes, to upload minutes onto the JNCC website.

3. 2012 SWG Annual Report

It was agreed, given that most of the SPAR SWG's current work relates to the SPA Review that the SWG Annual Report should be deferred and produced as a 2012 / 2013 report, similar to the last report for 2010/2011.

Defra intimated that no comment had been received from N2KSRC members in respect of the 2010-2011 report, and this should now be considered to be accepted by the N2KSRC.

SPAR Review

4. Decision Framework, overall progress and update (paper)

DS updated the SPAR SWG on progress with the decision framework reviews.

Action 3. DS to circulate the two histograms showing the SPI plots for each species' deviation from the regression line to the group for information.

Action 4. DS to discuss with BTO whether BBS data can assist with analysis of populations of more common species on protected sites.

Action 5. SWG to send any comments they have on the Decision Framework Sub-group progress report to DS

Action 6. DS to prepare a draft proforma for the species accounts for the review report; Decision Framework Sub-group to develop several specimen species accounts.

5. Treatment of waterbird assemblages

Action 7. DS and IB to draft a text with the aim of engendering a consistent UK-wide government and agency position on the treatment and protection of species in assemblages. This text is important in the context of the SPA review and would be discussed further with Defra, the devolved administrations and the Countryside Agencies.

6. Establishment of Editorial Group (paper)

Action 8. AM and IB to decide how the editorial group will work in future and to identify tasks.

7. Peer review

The SPAR SWG agreed that it appeared appropriate to peer review the decision framework sooner rather than at the end of the SPA review process, as this would allow more time to consider any observations and make any necessary amendments (as appropriate). AT noted that Defra had secured funding for the peer review and looked forward to receiving the tender document in due course.

Action 9. AM to ensure tendering documents are ready by October 2012.

Action 10. Decision Framework Sub-group to complete Tranche I and II by October 2012.

Action 11. Members to suggest names for the tendering process.

8. Discussion of work plan and timetable (paper)

Update by IB. It was agreed that the Tranche I & II species would be run through the Decision Framework by the end of October 2012 and that a good draft of the complete report would be ready by the end of the financial year.

Action 12: AM to update forward timetable of work for the Review

Brief updates

9. Updating of Ramsar Information Sheets (paper)

DS gave an update on progress. AT noted that the UK had given a commitment to update Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) in line with the recently adopted revised RIS format adopted at Ramsar CoP11 (July 2012). However, it was agreed that Defra would take this issue forward separately with the devolved administrations and country agencies (ie out of the SPAR SWG forum).

10. Index to Key Rulings of the European Court of Justice

AT noted that Defra would pursue with legal advisors (ie assessing any additional measures necessary to ensure UK compliance with European case law relevant to the legal interpretation of the Birds Directive).

Action 14. AT to keep SWG informed of the decision regarding key ECJ rulings

11. Little Gull data

Action 15. AM/EM to liaise with JNCC marine team re the gull data; JNCC to produce an update for the next meeting if appropriate.

12. Progress with Chapter 7

Update given by IB; noted that it may be more sensible to revise chapter order and use Ch7 earlier in the document as a context setter.

Action 16. IB to circulate the revised Chapter 7 to the SWG at an appropriate point in its revision.

Presentation

13. Capercaillie paper

SH and MT introduced the paper proposing a new statistical approach to the development of the 'capercaillie multiplier'. It was agreed that a statistically-based multiplier was preferable to a selected integer, and that this approach should be developed when genuine data, especially on mean counts at leks, are available.

Action 17. RE to ask JW to look at the Capercaillie paper and provide comments.
All to provide comments to SH

Action 18. SH to talk to DS about the best Capercaillie data that should be used in the SPA review.

Action 19. SH & MT to rework the paper in the light of SPAR SWG and Caper Working Group comments and produce a genuine new multiplier which can then be used for population and site assessments

Other issues

14. Implementation of 2001 Review recommendations

This referred to Action 7 from the last meeting (9 May 2012) re Honey Buzzard data. DS had now drafted a letter to the RBBP which would be issued by the Chair shortly.

Action 20: Chair to issue letter to RBBP on honey buzzard data.

15. New biogeographic revised waterbird population estimates (paper)

SPAR SWG noted that the 5th edition of Waterbird Population Estimates had been produced by Wetlands International and launched at the Ramsar CoP. SPAR SWG recommended that these estimates be used forthwith in SPA business.

Action 21. JNCC to recommend to the N2K Steering Committee that the revised waterbird population estimates should be adopted forthwith in line with best practice.

16. Update on Marine SPA provision

Action 22. MP & KK to keep the group up to speed with progress on population estimate work.

17. Update on country implementation

Brief updates were provided by NE, CCW, SNH.

18. Progress with other matters, review of APs from last meeting

It was noted that all actions from the previous meeting had been completed.

19. AOB

No AoB

20. Date and venue for next meeting

Action 23. Secretariat to confirm date and organise the next SWG in January 2013.