

15 February 2023: meeting minutes

England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

Date and time: 15 February 2023, 9:30am to 3:00pm

Location: [The Herbarium](#), Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Present: Andy Clements (Chair), Andrew Stringer, Jake Fiennes, Geoff Hilton, Martin Lines, John Ewen, Mike Fay, Karim Vahed, Jenny MacPherson, Ben McCarthy, Mike Shurmer, George Holmes, Sarah Dalrymple, Julia Touza, Scott Jackson, Delphine Pouget, Simon Lee (Secretariat)

Apologies: None

Minutes

1. Welcome from Chair

2. Round table introductions and housekeeping

3. Presentation from Delphine Pouget, Natural England

The presentation covered a short history of conservation translocations from a UK perspective including the need for a systematic review of successes and failures, the requirement for multi-objective delivery, and the importance of a social/economic perspective and stakeholder engagement.

On policy, guidance and targets, the presentation offered views on the England Species Reintroduction Taskforce (the 'taskforce') remit around native vs non-native translocations, non-regulated releases, species and habitat drivers, and indicators of ecosystem health. It concluded with discussion points around ambition, challenges and opportunities facing conservation translocations.

4. Discussion on the role of England Species Reintroductions Taskforce (ESRT)

The discussion explored the draft terms of reference to enable taskforce members to have an input on how best to use their expertise. It was agreed that a clear vision for the taskforce would help, alongside clarity of purpose to contribute most effectively to nature's recovery.

The taskforce should offer leadership based around its expert guidance and advice and be clear to whom the advice and guidance were addressed. The role of the taskforce will not include prioritising species for reintroduction but to ensure all the evidence is available for others to do so in line with a national strategy.

The requirement for an early communications plan was noted. The wider ecosystem health benefits should be recognised in taskforce analyses, advice and guidance.

Action:

Draft terms of reference to be amended and agreed.

5. Establishing a stakeholder forum

Ensuring widespread support for conservation translocations and for the work of the taskforce required the establishment of a Stakeholder Forum. This will be stated in the terms of reference. It was agreed that it will be important to engage with those who may be initially unsupportive. The experience of the Scottish Forum for Species Reintroductions would be informative. Members of the taskforce expressed support for an annual conference/seminar to share best practice.

Actions:

- establish membership of Stakeholder Forum at next meeting
- taskforce and Natural England to convene a conference/seminar in March 2024

6. Presentation of propagation/translocation science by staff of Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

During lunch, research staff from Kew presented their work on the propagation and translocation of the Lady's Slipper Orchid, demonstrating the breadth of taxa to be covered by the work of the taskforce.

7. Next steps and dates of future meetings

Taskforce members were asked to provide ideas for the list of topics on which the taskforce will provide advice and guidance. In addition, work will be carried out on who to include in the stakeholder forum, to be informed by ideas from members.

The next meeting will be online, will include both these topics and a discussion on commissioning research.

Members asked the Chair to discuss with Defra colleagues the level of support and funding on offer from the department. Members requested that the online GOV.UK webpage be accelerated and available as soon as possible.

The Chair thanked all for attending this first full meeting, the Natural England staff for the Secretariat work, and Professor Mike Fay from RBG Kew for hosting the taskforce.

Actions:

- members to provide ideas on stakeholders and issues for taskforce advice and guidance
- Chair to speak to senior Defra officials on levels of support, funding and webpage
- dates of next meeting to be circulated and agreed