

# England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

## 24 April 2023: meeting minutes

### **Location**

The meeting was held online.

### **Attendees**

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

### **Apologies**

Sarah Dalrymple, John Ewen, Martin Lines

### **Minutes**

#### **1. Welcome from the Chair**

#### **2. Minutes and actions from last meeting**

Andy Clements and Simon Lee provided an update on actions from the England Species Reintroductions Taskforce (ESRT) meeting of 15 February 2023. All have been completed or are being progressed satisfactorily.

#### **3. Efra Select Committee Inquiry**

Andy Clements briefed the taskforce on his oral evidence given to the Efra Select Committee inquiry into species reintroductions that took place on 21 May 2023.

#### **4. Forward planning**

Simon Lee introduced a proposed outline plan that set out the anticipated timeline and associated budget for taskforce workstreams such as:

- member meetings
- commissions and products
- sub-groups
- stakeholder forum
- 2024 conference
- first year review

- broader communications

A discussion followed that explored and agreed taking forward workstreams through ‘task and finish’ sub-groups and commissions. As such, members will lead and participate in sub-group activity, bringing in additional expertise and commissioning research as required, with prior agreement on spend and outputs reviewed and agreed by the full taskforce. To guide future planning and priorities, members felt it was important to be aware of the quantum and range of contemporary translocation projects and proposals in England.

### **Action**

Natural England to collate and provide a list of extant translocation projects and emerging proposals for the taskforce.

## **5. Stakeholder forum**

Simon Lee briefed members on the initial ideas for the stakeholder forum, proposed stakeholder conference in 2024 and broader public engagement. Natural England is planning a species recovery conference in early 2024, and Simon Lee highlighted the opportunity to combine events. In the following discussion, members indicated that a more targeted approach to taxon-specific audiences and existing networks and events may be a more fruitful way of engaging stakeholders in the work of the taskforce. Karim Vahed and Mike Fay expressed support for this approach, suggesting that invertebrate and plant interests are often crowded out by debates around megafauna. Andy Clements stated that he would be happy to initiate a direct dialogue with invertebrate and plant conservation organisations. Members also indicated that an agreed taskforce narrative on the role of conservation translocations in nature would be helpful in supporting future messaging.

### **Actions**

1. Natural England to provide a brief overview of how conservation translocations can benefit wider nature recovery in England.
2. Karim Vahed and Mike Fay to provide names of organisations representing invertebrate and plant interests to Andy Clements and Simon Lee.
3. Andy Clements agreed to present the work of the taskforce at suitable future events, such as the NBN conference, as time commitments allow.

## **6. Communications**

Andy Clements briefed members on proposals to have a dedicated taskforce blog (hosted by Natural England as Secretariat) and a twitter account as vehicles for public communications and wider engagement. Members agreed to progress the taskforce blog and consider other social media platforms in due course, based on capacity.

### **Action**

Andy Clements to share draft blog text for comment and agreement with taskforce members prior to publication.

## **7. Topics for ESRT to provide advice on**

Andy Clements thanked members for their contributions of suggested topics and led a discussion on prioritisation and process for tackling the themes and issues raised.

Members provided further background and details for each of the subjects, agreeing related themes and a phased approach for addressing topics. Andrew Stringer stated that Forestry England is commissioning research on the relationship and best practice principles concerning conservation translocations and conservation grazing schemes. Future themes for the taskforce to consider include establishing which species are considered native and a perceived mismatch of conservation activity between sites (habitats) and species.

### **Actions**

1. Geoff Hilton agreed to convene a task and finish group to prepare a report on factors that will lead towards more and better conservation translocations.
2. Andrew Stringer agreed to convene a task and finish group to develop a predator guild assessment.

Note: both task and finish groups are to provide progress updates at the July meeting and share completed draft reports for discussion at the September meeting.

## **8. Next steps, dates and locations of future meetings**

Andy Clements summarised the actions from the meeting and thanked members for their time and input. Members contributed suggestions for locations of the next meeting to be held in June or early July 2023.

### **Action**

Natural England to canvass and agree dates with members for all the meetings planned for 2023.