

# 11 July 2023: meeting minutes

## England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

**Date and time:** 11 July 2023, 10:30am to 3:30pm

**Location:** Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge and online

**Attendees:** Andy Clements (Chair), Julia Touza, Sarah Dalrymple, Jenny MacPherson, Ben McCarthy, Geoff Hilton, George Holmes, Delphine Pouget, Rachel Gardner (deputising for Andrew Stringer), Jake Fiennes, Martin Lines, Mike Fay, Scott Jackson, Simon Lee (Secretariat)

**Apologies:** Andrew Stringer, Karim Vahed, John Ewen, Mike Shurmer

## 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 taskforce meeting held on the 24 April 2023. All actions have been completed or are being progressed satisfactorily.

### 3. Sub-group updates

The following reports on actions from the previous meeting, with Andrew Stringer convening a task and finish group to develop a predator guild assessment and Geoff Hilton organising a group to investigate factors that will lead towards more and better conservation translocations.

#### 3.1. Predator guild assessment

Rachel Gardner provided an update on progress which includes the production of a draft project brief and a first online meeting.

The group has concluded the scale of the research is too large to be undertaken by group members alone and presented the desire to commission consultants to undertake aspects of the work, with group members acting as project board overseeing the work. There was a subsequent discussion around scope, timescales and costs of this research, including questions on the detailed assessment criteria.

#### 3.2. More and better conservation translocations

Geoff Hilton gave an update on progress comprising the production of an outline project brief and an initial online meeting.

The group has also concluded the scale of the research is too great to be undertaken by group members alone. The group has proposed progression of activity through commission of post-doctoral position (or similar), also with group members acting as project board overseeing the work. In the following roundtable discussion, there was consensus that both sub-groups would benefit from the expertise of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Conservation Translocation Specialist Group.

### **Actions**

Andrew Stringer to share a revised project brief with taskforce members.

Geoff Hilton to share a revised project brief with taskforce members.

Natural England to liaise with sub-group leads over costs and timescales for contracts.

## **4. Commissioning research and projects**

Simon Lee led a discussion around process, standards and timescales for commissioning research and other deliverables.

### **Actions**

Natural England to produce and share draft guidance for proposing, commissioning, procurement and quality assurance of taskforce outputs.

Natural England to progress and distribute short paper on benefits of conservation translocations for nature recovery to help frame taskforce and sub-group activity.

Natural England to share list of extant conservation translocation projects and emerging proposals.

## **5. Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee Inquiry Report**

Andy Clements, Delphine Pouget and the Scott Jackson provided an update and commentary on the main recommendations from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee Inquiry Report on reintroductions published 11 July 2023. It was noted that the taskforce will continue develop its work as an independent technical advisory group with reference to the report's conclusions and recommendations.

## **6. Communications and engagement**

Simon Lee provided an update on the taskforce blog and shared drive (SharePoint Online), which will be the future central working repository for taskforce activity. Rachel Gardner led a discussion on public engagement best practice. Simon Lee conveyed the offer of a facilitated 'Message House' workshop from Defra Communications Team to help inform public communications messaging and target audiences. Andy Clements led a discussion on stakeholder engagement.

## **Actions**

Natural England to distribute SharePoint link with taskforce members.

Andy Clements and Simon Lee to draw up list and arrange 2 to 3 initial meetings with key stakeholders and progress next steps for the stakeholder forum.

Natural England to investigate the potential for a joint species recovery and reintroductions themed conference in 2024.

Natural England to organise an online Message House workshop for autumn 2023.

Sarah Dalrymple to scope suitable platforms for an online repository to hold best practice information on conservation translocations.

## **7. Updates session**

Round table session on topical organisational news and wider issues related to conservation translocations. These included briefings on:

- attendance of the Scottish National Species Reintroductions Forum
- Exeter University workshop on social dimensions of translocations
- Species Recovery Grant Scheme
- country agency joint position statement on pine marten strategy
- individual species projects

## **8. Sense check on priorities**

Following a round table dialogue, members agreed that they were happy with the general direction, Terms of Reference and current planned deliverables of the taskforce.

## **9. Future themes and speakers**

Simon Lee introduced and Andy Clements led a wide-ranging conversation on potential themes, topics and guest speakers for future meetings. Delphine Pouget conveyed the offer from the Norfolk Rivers Trust to give a presentation on the burbot reintroduction project.

## **Actions**

Natural England to set up spreadsheet on SharePoint Online for members to populate.

Natural England to invite Norfolk Rivers Trust to present at the meeting on 6 September 2023 concerning the proposal to reintroduce burbot.

## **10. Round up, date and location of next meeting**

Date of next meeting: 6 September (online, 9:30am to 12:30pm)

## **Tour of WWT breeding and rearing facilities**

The meeting was followed by a short tour of the captive breeding and rearing facilities at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge