

## England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

**Date and time:** 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023, 09:00-13:30

**Location:** Manatee Room, David Attenborough Building, Cambridge Conservation Initiative, University of Cambridge

**Attendees:** Andy Clements (Chair), Sarah Dalrymple, John Ewen, Jake Fiennes, Geoff Hilton, George Holmes, Martin Lines, Ben McCarthy, Delphine Pouget, Rachel Gardner, Mike Shurmer, Julia Touza, Karim Vahed, Mina Patel (Secretariat)

**Online:** Scott Jackson, Mike Fay, Andrew Stringer, Simon Lee (Secretariat)

**Apologies:** Jenny MacPherson

### Minutes

#### 1. Welcome from the Chair

Andy Clements welcomed attendees to the meeting and provided a brief synopsis of the background, member organisations of the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and activity undertaken at the David Attenborough Building.

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

Andy Clements asked members to confirm their acceptance of the previous minutes, noting that the agreed actions formed substantive items for this meeting's agenda.

#### 3. Sub-group updates

Andy Clements invited members to give updates on the following activity:

##### 3.1 *Barriers and enablers*

Geoff Hilton and George Holmes informed members of progress, noting that the revised project brief had been shared with sub-group members and forms the framework of the recently

signed collaborative agreement with the University of Leeds. The University will shortly advertise a 6-month post-doctoral position to lead and develop the project, with guidance and support from sub-group members.

##### 3.2 *Predator guild assessment*

Rachel Gardner and Andrew Stringer reported on activity since the September meeting, notably that the sub-group had agreed an updated project brief which has formed the basis of a formal competitive procurement process currently underway. Anticipated timescales of contract award and completion are from early through to mid-2024.

##### 3.3 *Blog 2*

Andy Clements gave a brief run through of the Taskforce's second [blog](#) published on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, which sets out the remit and role of the Taskforce alongside updates on recent and planned activity.

##### 3.4 *Stakeholder sessions*

Andy Clements, Karim Vahed, Martin Lines, Jake Fiennes and John Ewen provided a detailed synopsis of recent stakeholder engagement sessions held with entomological, farming and land owning and amphibian and reptile interests. Sessions have been well attended and positive, offering a valuable steer for future two-way discussion and raising some common themes and issues for the Taskforce to consider and help address.

### **Actions**

- Geoff Hilton to share project brief with all Taskforce members.
- Delphine Pouget to investigate the potential of LinkedIn (and other social media) for wider dissemination of blog materials and other communications.

### **4. Shape of future stakeholder engagement and communications**

Andy Clements reflected upon the three initial stakeholder engagement sessions to date and highlighted that further exploratory sessions are planned for the early part of the New Year with groups such as botanical interest groups, Government bodies and zoological societies. Andy Clements then led a group discussion around future direction of Taskforce stakeholder engagement and communications, resulting in a collective preference for continued sectoral sessions rather than larger conference formats. Further ideas and suggestions for developing engagement included providing opportunities for guest blogs by stakeholders, theme-based cross-sector sessions, Taskforce members presentation and representation at conferences, sector sessions to be openly advertised and undertaking a stakeholder mapping exercise.

### **Action**

- AC/DP to arrange future stakeholder engagement sessions with government bodies, BIAZA & zoos, botanical stakeholders

### **5. Online repository for best practice**

Sarah Dalrymple gave a presentation (to complement the previously circulated briefing paper) on potential options for the development of Taskforce hosted online platform for best practice guidance and interactive database of conservation translocation projects. The presentation showed examples of similar platforms in other countries, including a demonstration of their functionality. In the subsequent round table discussion, members expressed their general support further detailed investigation whilst noting the requisite need for ongoing funded professional support, method for incentivisation use, the value of connecting best practice guidance with a project register and the known high failure rate of similar (unsupported) platforms worldwide.

### **Actions**

- Sarah Dalrymple to lead a small group of Taskforce members (Andy Clements, John Ewen, Julia Touza and Delphine Pouget) to scope further detail proposal, evaluating purpose, long-term sustainability, costs and risks.
- Mina Patel to canvass suitable dates for a first meeting of the above sub-group.

### **6. Proposed burbot reintroduction to Norfolk**

Jonah Tosney, Norfolk Rivers Trust, gave a highly informative presentation on the gestation and current status of the proposed burbot *Lota lota* reintroduction to Norfolk, highlighting the detailed research that has supported feasibility and release protocols and site selection, alongside live issues such as blockers to sourcing founding stock. Jonah Tosney then fielded questions around wider benefits of the project and potential options for resolving sourcing problems.

## **7. Translocation of Spanish field crickets to Cornwall**

Karim Vahed gave a presentation on the background and consequent wider issues generated by the recent translocation of Spanish-sourced Field Cricket *Gryllus campestris* to a site in Cornwall by the University of Exeter. There followed a lively discussion around boundaries and definitions of native/indigenous status, potential costs and benefits of genetic supplementation to threatened UK populations and sectoral and societal framing of 'good' versus 'bad' translocations.

## **8. Plant reintroductions**

Mike Fay provided a detailed update on recent activity across botanical organisations, including the production of a practical guide to plant translocations by Plantlife, mounting interest in developing a central repository for plant translocation projects and the enthusiasm for engagement with the Taskforce amongst the botanical sector. Andy Clements reported a recent conversation with Kevin Walker, Head of Conservation Science at the Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland, looking towards stakeholder engagement.

### **Actions**

NE to set up a stakeholder engagement session with botanical interest groups early in 2024.

NE to invite Plantlife to share and/or present their work on a plant translocation guide to the Taskforce.

## **9. Member updates**

Andy Clements led a round table session on topical organisational news and wider issues related to conservation translocations. These included member briefings on:

- Feasibility work on proposed sturgeon reintroduction to the UK.
- Research using species distribution models in planning plant translocations.
- Project researching conservation grazing versus rewilding using large herbivores.
- Revisiting the national strategy for pine marten recovery.
- NE draft internal position statement and 'dashboard' for selecting suitable candidates for conservation translocations and developing guidance for welfare and biosecurity considerations for large herbivore translocations.
- Recent conference on using domestic livestock in conservation grazing schemes.
- Research into payments system for human-wildlife coexistence
- PhD project studying human mental wellbeing of proposers and detractors in conservation translocations.
- Managing expectations of influential landowners in translocation projects.
- Engagement with the National Threatened Species Recovery Actions programme.
- Opportunities for conservation translocations offered by Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Perception of increased number of unlawful translocations being undertaken in UK.
- Series of open access journal articles related to best practice for wader head starting.

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

Planned for February 2024. Date and location to be confirmed.