

England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

Date and time: 29th February 2024, 09:00-13:30

Location: Heslington Hall, York Environmental Sustainability Institute, University of York

Attendees: Andy Clements (Chair), Sarah Dalrymple, John Ewen, George Holmes, Martin Lines, Delphine Pouget, Mike Shurmer, Julia Touza, Karim Vahed, Mike Fay, Andrew Stringer, Will Stinson, Isabelle Pashley, Jeremy Sabel (Secretariat)

Online: Jake Fiennes, Rachel Gardner, Mina Patel (Secretariat)

Guest: Martin Gaywood (NatureScot)

Apologies: Jenny MacPherson, Geoff Hilton, Ben McCarthy

Minutes

1. Welcome from the Chair

Andy Clements welcomed attendees to the meeting.

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

George Holmes informed members that the University of Leeds have recruited Filippo Marino on a 6 month post-doctoral contract with an imminent start date. Filippo will lead and develop the project, with guidance and support from sub-group members.

3.2 Predator guild assessment

Andrew Stringer informed members that the University of York (Julia Touza) has been awarded a contract to carry out this work.

3.3 Repository & database

Sarah Dalrymple informed members that the sub-group agreed that a survey would be a good idea. This survey would ask stakeholders what they would like to see in a repository of good practice/database with a view to it being as user friendly and to incentivise contributions.

Actions

- Establish milestones for barriers and enablers project with the sub-group members (GH/JS)
- Comment on species being considered to be put forward to stakeholders in the multicriteria (all)
- SD to share database survey for comments from ESRT (all) and then to a wider group of stakeholders (SD/JS)

4. Year 1 Review and 2024 workplan

Andy Clements highlighted the Year 1 Review he has drafted which will be published on .gov.uk website. The discussion then turned to the 2024 workplan and more action to find common ground between practitioners and regulators including a workshop. There was also a discussion around whether the taskforce should encourage certain reintroductions through a prioritisation exercise.

Actions

- Comment on the Year 1 Review article (all)
- Share specification for ZSL/NE led workshop (JE/DP)
- Explore using Taskforce funding to investigate a larger scope for finding common ground (JS/DP)
- Share illicit species reintroductions PhD proposal for comment as to how taskforce funding might progress elements of this work (JS)
- Share TSRA and reintroduction dashboard with ESRT (DP)

5. Comms and stakeholder engagement

Andy Clements stated that members should feel free to represent ESRT at conferences and events and then invited members to come up with ideas for ways in which the ESRT can increase its communications. There was a brief discussion about a logo for the taskforce but noting that there is a communications workshop planned for members on 7th March where this will be discussed again.

Actions

- Explore opportunities to speak with Ministers (WS)
- Members to put ESRT on email signatures (all)

6. “Conservation translocations – some international experience and emerging issues”

Martin Gaywood, NatureScot, presented some key messages from his recent Churchill Fellowship study trip to Australia and Canada.

7. 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:

- A new pilot project to develop new ark sites for White-clawed crayfish in the West Midlands.
- IUCN assisted colonisation taskforce meeting in next 2 weeks.
- BOU Avian translocation conference 12-13 November this year (online)
- NE/WWT/RSPB - newly established national working group on Black-tailed godwit to deliver the new UK single species action plan. Includes work to reinforce existing populations in the Fens and develop a captive breeding population to support translocation to other wetland landscapes in England.
- Kent WT/Blean Rewilding Project - workshop in May – to decide which species to introduce over next 20 years
- Conservation grazing/ecological replacement – Ecosulis ltd commissioned and reporting end of March
- New woodland planting - looking at whole community translocation - including mycorrhiza working with Plantlife
- Doing a piece on wood ant translocations as many forests are missing them.
- Early stage desk-based study on wildcat reintro in Kielder - social and biological elements. Will assess and might lead to next phase (ground-based feasibility, further engagement)
- Post-doc on projections for effect of climate on orchids and mycorrhizas - Western Australia - will come back to UK to apply same techniques.
- Post-doc on payments for co-existence (not compensation) analysis going on - Scandinavia/Africa
- Dialogue between paleo-ecologists/reintroduction specialists - learning from Quaternary Period - workshop to be finalised in the next few days.

8. Round up and date of next meeting – 6 June 2024, Forest of Dean