

# England Species Reintroductions Taskforce (ESRT): botany stakeholder meeting

**Date and time:** 10 June 2024, 10am to 12pm

**Location:** Microsoft Teams

## **Attendees:**

- Andy Clements: Taskforce Chair
- Elinor Breman: Royal Botanical Gardens Kew
- Stephanie Miles: Royal Botanical Gardens Kew
- Mike Fay: Royal Botanical Gardens Kew and ESRT
- Sarah Dalrymple: Liverpool John Moors University and ESRT
- Delphine Pouget: Natural England and ESRT
- Molly Dadswell: Natural England
- Alex Prendergast: Natural England
- Mags Cousins: Natural England
- Rachel Warmington: Plantlife
- Elizabeth Cooke: Plantlife
- Robbie Blackhall-Miles: Plantlife
- Kevin Walker: Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI)
- Stephen Morley: National Trust
- Jonathan Leadley: Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT)
- Fred Rumsey: Natural History Museum and Independent
- Aline Finger: Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh

## **Note of the meeting**

### **1. Welcome and introductions**

Andy Clements welcomed everyone to the meeting, followed by individual introductions including summaries of respective professional backgrounds and experience with conservation translocations.

### **2. Background to the taskforce**

Andy Clements, Mike Fay, Sarah Dalrymple and Delphine Pouget provided a brief account of the formation and backdrop to the taskforce, covering governance, funding, membership, vision, purposes and current activity. Andy Clements also set out the aims and objectives of this meeting:

- to present the work of the taskforce
- to listen to views, concerns and experiences of the stakeholders

Key topics raised and discussed at this stage:

- understanding barriers or enablers to better translocations and how critical it is
- understanding ecology and social dimensions of reintroducing predator guild to England
- the requirement for a national database and repository system for translocations in the UK
- joining up with other provinces in the UK (such as Scotland Forum)

### **3. Roundtable discussion**

Attendees contributed to a wide-ranging and stimulating discussion, debating contemporary topics and issues around conservation translocations, public communications and ways of sustaining an ongoing interaction with the taskforce.

Key subjects raised and discussed:

- attitudes to conservation translocations (botanists more 'risk averse' for rare species but less so for habitat restoration, such as green hay)
- altitudinal and latitudinal migration studies to support populations through assisted colonisation
- stronger, more robust reporting and monitoring needed for translocation projects
- rare vs native assemblages and seed mixes, and how to distinguish them – what should we prioritise?
- anthropogenic changes, is it appropriate to move plants around to maintain populations? Kevin Walker commented on the biogeography of plants (trees in particular) – the impact people have made on the distribution of trees
- definitions of nativeness influence the understanding of ecological niches in plants
- pros and cons about translocations and defining it (philosophical discussions) – need for clear guidance and standardised toolkit or risk assessment; for example, the Lady's slipper orchard (native vs non-native origins – genetics suggest cross pollination)
- short time frames and funding cycles hamper work botanists are trying to do – need more long-term implementation with secured funding; this is a barrier to successful projects
- more experts and expertise for threatened species is required
- incentive for conservation practitioners or land managers to keep records of projects and outcomes
- scepticism around conservation translocations and their long-term success – should nature reserve management be prioritised?

- ‘plant blindness’ as a delivery issue – people are unaware of how influential plants are on their ecosystems; there has been a history of plants being relocated to wrong habitat
- does the Taskforce link up with local nature recovery strategies (LNRS)?
- biosecurity
- blog posts – please see: [Scottish Plant Recovery – Botanic Stories \(rbge.org.uk\)](https://rbge.org.uk) (from Aline Finger)
- monitoring and suitable measures of success: Robbie Blackhall-Miles argued that a translocation is considered successful after 3 generations or 10 years (whichever is longer), but the point at which translocated populations are treated as ‘wild’ continues to be a grey area
- the need for a separate stakeholder engagement session specifically for trees
- upcoming translocation conferences (International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 2026, Edinburgh?)

#### **4. Summary and round up**

Discussions around how members would like to be involved in the future. Members shared their positive experiences with translocating plants, and support received from the public.

Andy Clements thanked attendees for their open, candid and valuable contributions, noting the following as agreed actions from the meeting:

- Natural England to send round a note of the meeting (with an agreed version posted on the taskforce webpage)
- Plantlife, BSBI and ESRT members to write blog posts for the taskforce to publish
- Elizabeth Cooke (Plantlife) and Alex Prendergast (Natural England), offered to present work on translocating weedy species to the taskforce
- a survey is currently being circulated by Sarah Dalrymple – responses to this survey will be used for the development of online resources including a database