England Species Reintroductions Taskforce (ESRT): government bodies stakeholder meeting

Date and time: 18 July 2024, 12:30pm to 2pm

Location: Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- Andy Clements: Chair of ESRT
- Delphine Pouget: Natural England and ESRT
- Will Stinson: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- Andrew Stringer: Forestry England and ESRT
- Gerard Clover: Forestry Research
- Eileen Stuart: NatureScot
- Dave Stone: Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)
- Richard Gray: Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- Murray Thompson: Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)
- Robbie McDonald: Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)
- Julia Touza-Montero: University of York and ESRT
- Sara McGuckin: Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
- Liz Halliwell Natural Resources Wales (NRW)
- Jeremy Sabel: Natural England (NE)
- Mina Patel: NE
- Molly Dadswell: NE minutes

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.

2. Background to the taskforce

Andy Clements, Andrew Stringer, Julia Touza-Montero, Will Stinson and Delphine Pouget gave a brief account of the formation and backdrop to the taskforce, covering 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 not just from an England perspective, but in partnership with the other UK countries

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 issues raised and discussed:

- are conservation translocations making ecosystems more resilient in the face of pressures such as climate change and habitat fragmentation?
- importance of understanding socio-economic impacts
- ability for populations to go forward and colonise without human assistance, such as red kites
- some of the pressures are more challenging for flora and less charismatic spp. (such as nitrogen pollution)
- the need for a clear ecological rationale for conservation translocations that builds in ecosystem resilience
- need to understand disease risks and link up with work on invasive non-native species and biosecurity work
- how conservation translocations can contribute to national and international biodiversity targets including abundance and species extinction:
 - o what can be done to proactively demonstrate this?
 - are conservation translocations a big part of the UK's statutory commitments?
- the need to collaborate in areas such as:
 - promoting the benefits of lower profile conservation translocations, such as pine hoverfly and mountain sow-thistle
 - social acceptability the distribution of costs and benefits does not fall evenly with land managers often shouldering costs
 - performance indicators measures of success, taking into account that many conservation translocations are undertaken by environmental non-governmental organisations (eNGOs) with limited resources
 - switch from being reactive to being more strategic supporting projects which make most difference to targets and ecological restoration
- curlew head starting discussions around a UK-wide hatchery for multiple benefits including economies of scale
- legality of translocations varies according to species and different laws across UK
- the need to collaborate across devolved administrations
- need for better knowledge exchange Delphine Pouget explained the repository and database subgroup's aim to fulfil this UK-wide; link to live consultation shared: <u>England Conservation Translocations Database -</u> <u>opportunity to contribute to database development (google.com)</u>
- options for the database to link to existing systems: conservation evidence and collaboration for environmental evidence
- Wales is finalising its own reintroductions and translocations code
- importance of collecting evidence systematically

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- assisted colonisation another opportunity to collaborate across the 4 nations of the UK – Delphine Pouget explained that the ESRT are looking into a decision framework around this to tackle impacts from climate change
- communications Andy highlighted the ESRT website, the NE blog and that there will soon be an ESRT LinkedIn page

4. Summary and round up

Andy Clements thanked attendees for their valuable contributions.