

Terms of reference

The England Species Reintroductions Task Force

Vision

To realise the full benefits of species conservation translocations for nature recovery and society.

Aims

The England Species Reintroductions Taskforce (the 'taskforce') is an independent technical advisory group. It aims to bring together experts from a range of disciplines to provide evidence-led advice and guidance on existing and potential species conservation translocations in England.

The taskforce will:

- ensure conservation translocations are aligned with best practice in the IUCN Guidelines for *Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations (the 'IUCN Guidelines')* and the *Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations Code and Guidance for England (the 'England Code')*, considering all environmental, social and economic benefits and costs
- establish and work with a stakeholder forum to facilitate the development of partnerships leading to successful programmes for conservation translocations in England
- collate, review and share experiences and case studies from conservation translocation projects, both domestically and internationally, to build knowledge and an evidence base to inform reintroductions and translocations
- provide advice and guidance on a range of approaches and complex issues that informs strategy and enables practitioners and decision-makers
- commission technical assessments of potential species to provide advice on their suitability for reintroduction and/or translocation
- engage constructively with counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)

Deliverables

The taskforce will develop and publish materials – 'think-pieces' and technical assessments - to better understand the risks and benefits of species translocations and to ensure a consistent approach with the principles of the England Code and the IUCN Guidelines. The published outputs will assist stakeholders to identify the relative suitability of species for future translocations including consideration of their

environmental and socio-economic impact, licensing requirements and evidence gaps.

The taskforce will commission and review guidance around specific themes, for example, evaluation and removal of barriers to successful translocations, integration of conservation translocations with other tools and mechanisms for nature recovery, methodologies to assess the risks and benefits of translocations and the use of approaches such as assisted colonisation.

Outputs from the taskforce will be made available on a dedicated GOV.UK webpage, along with the terms of reference, membership biographies and minutes of the meetings.

Decision-making process

The taskforce should aim to reach consensus on the conclusions of outputs, wherever possible. Where consensus cannot be achieved, the Chair will take the final decision noting any lack of consensus.

Membership

Membership will comprise up to 16 organisations or individuals representing a cross section of relevant expertise. Initial membership includes scientific expertise on a range of taxa, conservation practice, land management and socio-economic specialisms.

The taskforce may co-opt or invite other individuals to advise on their particular expertise.

Audiences

Taskforce advice and guidance will be made available to government and statutory decision-makers, land management practitioners, conservation bodies other interest groups and the general public.

Confidentiality

All Taskforce members, including the Chair, have a duty to follow the Seven Principles of Public Life.

Members and the Chair must not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purpose.

Any information which is confidential in nature or which is provided in confidence without authority must not be disclosed.

The duty of confidentiality continues to apply for a period of 5 years after the appointment ends.

All matters relating to the taskforce and connected matters (including all information and personal data received in the course of carrying out duties), including confidential information must not be disclosed to anyone (including employers) except other members within the scope of the terms of reference, unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- express written authorisation from Defra or the Chair has been obtained (which will generally be given wherever reasonably required)
- it is legally required to disclose
- it can be shown that the information is already generally available and in the public domain and not as a result of any breach of duty
- it was already lawfully in the Members or Chair's possession prior to receiving it from Defra or other members of the Taskforce

Meetings and Secretariat

Meetings of the taskforce will occur 6 times in the first year to build momentum (4 in person and 2 online).

Under normal circumstances, members will be expected to attend meetings in person. If coronavirus restrictions are in place meetings will be held online.

The initial term of the taskforce will be 3 years, at which point a review of its role and purpose will take place. Natural England will provide the Secretariat function to the taskforce.

Budget

Defra will allocate an annual budget to support the work of the taskforce. Outputs requiring funding will be agreed with Defra prior to commission and will need to demonstrate value for money and clear delivery against the overall aims of the taskforce.

Proposing projects and tasks

- Any member can submit a proposal for a task or project to be undertaken by the ESRT.
- The proposal should be submitted for consideration at the next ESRT meeting.
- It should be made clear if this proposal will involve using ESRT funds managed by Natural England in their function as the Secretariat.
- If there are multiple proposals, the ESRT members should discuss them all and decide on which are priorities to take forward.
- Each proposal will require the approval of the ESRT (via correspondence if necessary) in order to progress to the commissioning stage. Where consensus cannot be achieved, the Chair will take the final decision noting any lack of consensus.

- The ESRT members should make sure they are satisfied that any proposal to be progressed is in line with the ESRT terms of reference – specifically the aims, deliverables and the 7 principles of public life.

Commissioning and submitting funding bids

- Once a project or task has been approved, a sub-group or project group of members should work up the commission and funding bid further.
- The sub-group or project group should report progress at each full meeting of the ESRT.
- The final commission and submission should be approved by the ESRT (via correspondence if necessary). Where consensus cannot be achieved, the Chair will take the final decision noting any lack of consensus.

Procurement of projects and tasks

- Where a funding bid has been successful and where proposals do not involve ESRT funds, the lead ESRT member should use the systems of their employer to progress procurement.
- Where proposals do involve ESRT funds, the lead ESRT member should work with the ESRT Secretariat to use the systems of Natural England including entering into legal contracts.
- If substantive contract changes are necessary, these should be reported to the ESRT Chair in a timely manner. The Chair may need to seek ESRT approval for the change, especially where this involves changes to funding amounts.

Quality assurance and peer review of outputs

- Outputs might include advice and guidance, research reports, comms products (for example, blogs, website updates), databases, or workshops.
- All outputs should be quality assured by the members of the ESRT to ensure compliance with the ESRT vision and aims.
- Advice, guidance and research reports should have an additional level of quality assurance involving a minimum of 2 external experts performing a peer review.
- External peer reviewers will be invited to perform the role by the Chair of the ESRT and a list of external peer reviewers will be held by the ESRT Secretariat.
- Final sign-off will lie with the Chair who may delegate authority for quality assurance to ESRT sub-groups, project groups or individual members.