

England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

Date and time: 28 November 2024, 09:00-13:00

Venue: River Room, Whipsnade Zoo

Attendees: Andy Clements (Chair), Sarah Dalrymple, Andrew Stringer, John Ewen, Geoff Hilton, Ben McCarthy, Delphine Pouget, Karim Vahed, George Holmes, Will Stinson, Jeremy Sabel (Secretariat), Mina Patel (Secretariat)

Online: Mike Shurmer

Apologies: Rachel Gardner, Mike Fay, Jenny MacPherson, Jake Fiennes, Julia Touza, Martin Lines

Guests in person: Andrew Terry and Alison Debney (ZSL), Tony Juniper (Chair of Natural England)

Guests online: David Simcox (Royal Entomological Society), Martin Gaywood and Kat O'Brien (NatureScot)

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 activities:

3.1 Barriers and enablers

Sub-group to meet on 06.12.24 to discuss how to take recommendations forward. Andy Clements is working on comments for the policy brief and will circulate.

3.2 Predator guild assessment

Andrew Stringer gave some thoughts on how this study might be taken forward including getting more detailed information from the landowning/farming sector, deeper investigation of social acceptability criteria and regional variation in viewpoints.

3.3 Hub and database

Sarah Dalrymple presented progress including work with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) on a specification for the database and consideration changing the 'conservation translocation project scoping form' on .gov.uk to enable better data collection.

3.4 Assisted colonisation framework

Sarah Dalrymple presented progress on developing the framework with current thinking moving away from priorities and towards feasibility.

3.5 Practitioner's workshop

Delphine Pouget updated progress on developing this workshop with the intention of bringing key stakeholders closer together. David and Sam Bavin have been commissioned to provide independent preparation and facilitation of this workshop on 27th February 2025.

3.6 Publishing reports and peer review

Will Stinson and Andy Clements are investigating possibility of publishing reports through Applied Ecology Resources. Candidates for peer review of reports are being sought through IUCN CTSG and OEP.

3.7 Looking forward

Andy Clements indicated that the Taskforce will soon be working on its Year 2 report and considering membership and continuity of the Taskforce as we approach the end of the first term in 2025.

Actions

- Barriers and enablers subgroup to report on how to take recommendations forward
- Circulate comments on the barriers and enablers policy brief (AC)
- Circulate predator guild assessment report (JS) and comment on how this work might be taken forward (All)
- Progress commissioning of CEH to carry out database development (SD/JS)
- Meeting of hub and database subgroup in new year to progress commission (include Catherine Whatley from NatureScot) (SD/DP/JS)
- Meeting to discuss changes to conservation translocation project scoping form (SD/DP/JS)
- Meeting of the assisted colonisation subgroup in the new year, including NE staff and Kat O'Brien from NatureScot, in order to comment on progress (SD/DP/JS)
- Call for case studies of conservation translocations to be published by NE (Vol.2) (All)
- Ask for candidates for peer review from CTSG IUCN (JE) and OEP (AC)
- Draft Year 2 report (AC)
- Explore how conservation translocations can be considered within government as a tool for achieving departmental/gov priorities (WS)
- Look at opportunities for Andy C to meet Minister Creagh (WS).

4. British native species hub

Andrew Terry presented ZSLs proposals for a UK native species recovery centre with specialist breeding facilities at Whippsnade as well as including promoting integration of nature into social, political and economic decision-making, engaging communities and embedding species within restoration programmes.

5. Stakeholder engagement analysis

Delphine Pouget led a session summarising the messages from Taskforce stakeholder engagement sessions.

Action:

- Review stakeholder engagement slide pack and comment on tasks that the Taskforce might take forward and further engagement that the Taskforce might undertake (All)

6. Large blue butterfly presentation

David Simcox FRES, Conservation Project Manager at the Royal Entomological Society gave a presentation on the re-introduction of the globally endangered Large blue butterfly *Phengaris arion* to the UK and how a conservation project underpinned by science progressed with lessons learned and future opportunities and challenges.

7. Member updates

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

- Ongoing work by ZSL on various disease risk assessments associated with reintroductions across England
- ZSL involved in recovering water vole across London, seagrass and native oysters restoration at sea
- Buglife involved in ongoing work with the Midlands Crayfish partnership – enhancing ark sites – 5 new sites in the next few years.
- Wart-biter bush cricket – translocation to a new Sussex Wildlife Trust site planned for next summer
- 13th November BOU conference panel discussion involving members of the Taskforce and others - useful to raise issues and profile of the Taskforce
- WWT reviewing curlew and black-tailed godwit headstarting work including seeking new sites for black-tailed godwit.
- FE prioritisation - focussing on keystone species and ecosystem engineers. Putting out a tender to review literature for keystone species and ecosystem engineers which will include lesser known species such as wood ant
- FE have recruited a new wildcat officer for Kielder to explore social feasibility
- Two pine marten releases as part of official projects Devon and Cumbria in the last couple of months
- White-tailed eagle consultation launched on Exmoor
- FE fungi/soil translocation being conducted on 29th November, small scale but monitoring with eDNA to see if the technique works
- Citizen Zoo Rewilding Conference in Cambridge 16-17th January at which Taskforce will be presenting.
- Taskforce LinkedIn site has attracted over 600 followers.
- Forest Research are submitting a stage 1 bid for a near-term climate change and species translocations/reintroductions project
- University of Leeds - 2 bids for illicit reintroductions PhDs being submitted
- University of Leeds - field work on impact on human being of species translocations, specifically citizen science and increased connection to nature
- Liverpool John Moores University - paper published on reintroduction of dormice and climate suitability: [The Society for Conservation Biology](#)
- Liverpool John Moores University - Papers on translocation database analyses (US and Europe) will be published soon
- IUCN bryophyte translocation guidelines being worked on
- National Trust – new threatened species delivery programme. Working on the following translocations at various stages including feasibility studies: Large blue butterfly, wart-biter cricket, white-clawed crayfish, chough, red-backed shrike, dormice, beaver, yellow meadow ant, pine marten and white-tailed eagle.
- Scottish Animal Welfare Commission looking at conservation translocations and incorporating welfare into decision-making
- IUCN Conservation Planning Specialist Group helping with Wildcat Strategy and with Lynx to Scotland project
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy due to be launched imminently including communicating with the wider public on the need for conservation translocations

Round-up and date of next meeting – Thursday 6th February 2025, Liverpool John Moore’s University