

England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

Date and time: Thursday 26 February 2026, 09:00-13:00

Venue: The Hog's Back Hotel, Seale Lane, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 1LE

Attendees: Andy Clements (Chair), Sarah Dalrymple, George Holmes, Mike Fay, Julia Touza, Will Stinson, Ben McCarthy, Martin Lines, Jeremy Sabel (Secretariat), Lesley Truelove (Secretariat), Tim Baker (Secretariat)

Online: Andrew Stringer, Mike Shurmer, Jake Fiennes, Rachel Gardner, Geoff Hilton, Martin Gaywood (NatureScot & University of the Highlands and Islands), Catherine Whatley & Kat O'Brien (NatureScot)

Guests: Jim Foster (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, ARC), Jack Harper (ARC), Tony Gent (ARC), Sarah Dawkins (NE), Jess Aldred (NE)

Apologies: Delphine Pouget, Jenny MacPherson, John Ewen, Karim Vahed, Katie Tourigny-Bridger (Defra)

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, and noted all actions are ongoing at current time.

3. Activity updates

Andy Clements invited members to give updates on the following activities:

3.1 Conservation introductions framework

Sarah Dalrymple updated the Taskforce on progress toward project outputs, confirming that her Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU) team will deliver final reports by March 2026 and is jointly funded by NatureScot. A draft framework and several guidance documents have been produced and will be tested through case studies before finalisation.

3.2 Contribution of conservation translocations to biodiversity targets

Jeremy Sabel explained how this year's work carried out by Footprint Ecology and Ecorys is positioned as a preliminary, enabling phase that could be expanded with further funding next financial year. By the end of March 2026, the team will deliver outputs on ecosystem function restoration, a conservation translocation decision-making tool, a value for money framework, and a draft report with recommendations, followed by a final report and presentation after Easter.

3.3 UK Conservation Translocations Database

This project is also jointly funded with NatureScot. Further refinement is being carried out by UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) with a redesigned web layout and user testing led. The database is intended to support knowledge sharing, capture key monitoring outcomes and project successes, and provide a transparent space for projects to report progress.

3.4 Systematic review of guidance

This review is being carried out by Natural England's Evidence Synthesis team. This workstream will identify gaps and overlaps in current conservation translocation guidance and is due to report in summer 2026.

3.5 Hub feasibility

The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), and the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (RBGE) are completing a commission from the Taskforce to scope the feasibility and desirability of establishing an online UK hub for all types of conservation translocation and is due to report in March 2026.

3.6 Decision making tools

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) has been commissioned by the Taskforce to develop a suite of educational resources on structured and responsible decision-making, delivered as a series of concise YouTube videos. The work is being undertaken collaboratively by ZSL, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Conservation Translocation Specialist Group (IUCN-CTSG) and the Taskforce, bringing together complementary expertise to ensure the materials are authoritative, accessible and aligned with best practice.

Actions

- Sarah Dalrymple (LJMU) to finalise the Conservation Introductions framework by end of March 2026
- UK CEH to deliver finalised Database by end of March 2026
- Footprint Ecology and Ecorys to report on contribution of conservation translocations to biodiversity targets, draft by March 2026
- NE Synthesis team to deliver systematic review of guidance by summer 2026
- University of the Highlands and Islands Inverness and RBGE to deliver UK online hub scoping study by March 2026
- ZSL to deliver decision-making tools project by March 2026

4. Budgets/priorities for next year/indicative budgets

Jeremy presented the Taskforce's indicative budget for 2026/27 and the Taskforce had a discussion around priority workstreams for the coming year.

5. Communications

Jeremy Sabel provided an overview of the Taskforce's communications activity. The Taskforce published its first 2 reports recently:

- (i) [Barriers and enablers to more and better conservation translocations in England](#)
- (ii) [Stakeholders' priorities for predator guild re-introductions decisions in England](#)

Over the past 18 months, the Taskforce and external contributors have published 11 blogs on LinkedIn, with a further five in development. Jeremy encouraged the

continuation of this work and welcomed additional blog contributions. The Taskforce's LinkedIn account now has more than 1,500 followers.

Actions

- Publish further blogs as planned
- Explore articles in industry publications as well as 'in-house' publications

6. Review of Taskforce – membership review discussion

The Taskforce had a discussion about membership going forward taking into account a need for continuity and expertise balanced with a need for diversity and seeking new members with time to drive the Taskforce forward.

Actions

- Members to capture their ideas for changes to membership
- Update Terms of Reference and implement changes

7. Workshop – Lost Species discussion

Tim Baker outlined recent discussions around 'lost herpetofauna', including how we determine native status, how time and resources should be prioritised, and how biosecurity and animal welfare considerations can be embedded in decision making. Geoff Hilton then summarised outcomes from a workshop with NE and ZSL on lost birds, aimed at guiding how proposals for reintroducing formerly native species should be assessed. He highlighted the differing pressures behind long-term versus recent extinctions, such as historic hunting compared with modern habitat loss, Geoff suggested that the Taskforce would benefit from developing a clear, evidence-based consensus on what constitutes a native species, including where evidence is sufficient and where further exploration is needed. The Taskforce then debated these issues.

Action

- The Taskforce generated multiple possible research questions for future work

8. Member updates

Holkham Estate

Jake Fiennes stated that Jeremy Sabel is putting together a presentation in March for the National Nature Reserve (NNR) advisory group to highlight the work of the Taskforce and how it might support NNR purposes. Jake also stated that the National Estate for Nature Group presents a good opportunity to communicate the role of the Taskforce to private landowners and Ministers.

NatureScot

Martin Gaywood updated that the 4th International Conservation Translocation Conference will take place in Edinburgh on 7-9 September 2026, with abstracts due by 31 March. The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy will emphasise landscape scale delivery, restoration and recovery, with conservation translocation featuring prominently and helping to seed new focal projects. Recent funding decisions include two additional years of support for Saving Wildcats and a further two to three years for the Scottish

Plant Recovery Project across 12 priority species, alongside a project assessing the feasibility and desirability of polecat reinforcement in Scotland. A joint meeting between the Taskforce and the Scottish National Species Reintroduction Forum is scheduled for 4 June at RBGE.

Wildfowl and Wetland Trust (WWT)

Geoff Hilton updated that a wader bid is being submitted to the Species Recovery Programme (SRP) for grant funding but that other species bids were unsuccessful. WWT have withdrawn an SRP bid to fund collaboration between projects working on White Tailed Eagle. This work will now be funded by Forestry England.

Forestry England

Rachel Gardner highlighted ongoing work on beaver projects in small catchments, alongside larger scale planning in the Severn and Humber catchments to identify the most effective approaches. Feasibility assessments for the South-west Wildcat and Kielder projects are now available online, and Forestry England is also developing a project on pine marten connectivity across central England in collaboration with Forest Research and the Wildlife Trusts. Forestry England is currently involved in c. 30 conservation translocation projects across forest wilding initiatives. Andrew Stringer noted that the mapping project on influential species will be completed by summer 2026, and that there is growing interest in soil translocations, particularly concerning fungi and bacteria- with a draft disease risk analysis for soil translocations expected in the coming months.

University of York

Involved in a living labs project involving species translocations in Hungary, Belgium and Spain, will update at next meeting. Julia has been appointed for economic advisory panel for DEFRA.

Nature Friendly Farming Network

Martin Lines highlighted Environmental Land Management budgets as a key delivery mechanism for species work and called for more join up. How can the Taskforce help with comms across DEFRA departments?

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC)

Jim Foster updated that ARC have various conservation translocations ongoing and monitoring to ensure they are delivering. SRP bids are being created including for the next phase of pool frog conservation translocation. There is also a recent focus on exploring issues within ecosystem function for which Jim thanks the Taskforce for their valuable discussions today.

Natural England

Jess Aldred reported ongoing support for Natural England Operations and SRP bids in the Thames Solent area, noting her continued work on New Forest cicada and summer lady's tresses alongside wider species -recovery projects, and highlighted efforts to improve resources for Natural England Area Team staff by better integrating

Countryside Stewardship and other tools. Sarah Dawkins emphasised the significant opportunity for advancing species recovery through the forthcoming SRP funding round and noted strong public support for recent beaver releases.

University of Leeds

George Holmes updated that he starts a placement in DEFRA landscape recovery team for 1 year from the beginning of March and that he will be introducing environmental history perspectives into species conversations at various conferences this year.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Mike Fay reported Kew's involvement in several SRP bids, including projects for red helleborine, fringed gentian and lady's slipper orchid. He also reported on a recent meeting with Ciara Duggan (Hertfordshire Zoo's Centre for Species Survival; CSS) - Ciara has replaced Andrea Dempsey. Their aim is to stimulate conservation action for underrepresented endemic UK species, working with the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) across three strands: applying the IUCN Species Survival Commission Assess-Plan-Act cycle, supporting local initiatives such as Wildlife Trusts and the Herts & Middlesex Badger Group, and undertaking onsite monitoring with data submitted to national databases. Ciara is currently completing Red List and conservation planning training and is seeking ideas for UK-based work; from a plant perspective, the recently published GB Red List for vascular plants means further UK Red Listing is not required, and orchids have already been assessed twice at the European level. Potential areas discussed included Red Listing for UK Overseas Territories orchids or conservation planning work for UK orchids, and there may be opportunities for collaboration between CSS and the Taskforce.

DEFRA

Will Stinson updated that he is leading beaver long-term management plan in England, co-creating with stakeholders. Looking to publish findings next winter.

9. Date of next meeting

4 June, Edinburgh. Taskforce to meet for dinner on 3 June, and meet prior to the joint meeting with the Scottish Forum on the 4 June.

10. AoB

Jim Foster expressed his pleasure in hosting the Taskforce and reiterated ARC's willingness to host members in future, after which Andy thanked ARC for hosting, organising site visits and contributing to discussions.