England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

Date and time: Thursday 24 September 2026, 09:00-13:00

Venue: Exmoor National Park Authority, Exmoor House, Dulverton, Devon

Attendees: Andy Clements (AC) (Chair), Sarah Dalrymple (SD), Julia Touza-Montero (JTM), Mike Shurmer (MS), Mike Fay (MF), Will Stinson (WS), John Ewen (JE), Ben McCarthy (BM), Jeremy Sabel (JS) (Secretariat), Zoe Allin (ZA) (Secretariat), Isabelle Pashley (IP) (Secretariat).

Online: Jake Fiennes (JF), Jenny MacPherson (JM), Andrew Stringer (AS), George Holmes (GH).

Guests: Martin Gaywood (MG) (NatureScot & University of the Highlands and Islands – online), Ali Hawkins (AH), Ali Cockburn (ACo) and Sarah Bryan (SB) (Exmoor National Park Authority), Julie Eaton (JEa) (Natural England).

Apologies: Delphine Pouget, Rachel Gardner, Martin Lines, Geoff Hilton, Katie Tourigny-Bridger (Defra), Kat O'Brien (NatureScot).

Minutes

1. Welcome from the Chair

AC welcomed attendees to the meeting.

2. Welcome from Exmoor National Park Authority

SB welcomed the Taskforce to Exmoor House, highlighting the importance of engagement and the partnerships between Exmoor National Park Authority and the local community, organisations and agencies.

3. Minutes and actions from last meeting

AC asked members to confirm their acceptance of the previous minutes.

4. Taskforce Roadmap (SD)

SD provided an update on the development of the Taskforce Roadmap. This document represents a 'statement of intent', which will be publicly accessible and which sets out the plan of action and priorities for the Taskforce going forwards. The Roadmap will be a dynamic working document and will be reviewed annually.

SD then led the Taskforce through a workshop to develop the Roadmap further.

Actions

- All: Taskforce to review actions and complete spreadsheet by 13 November. Further discussions at the next Taskforce meeting (26 November).

5. Membership Review (AC)

The Taskforce are looking to recruit new members. The purpose of this recruitment is to ensure the Taskforce encourages fresh perspectives alongside retaining consistent experience, to improve equity, diversity and inclusion and to fill gaps in taxa and professional expertise. The Taskforce would also like to include early career scientist(s) or practitioner(s) where possible.

Action

- JS to update ToR for Taskforce
- AC to have the advert drafted for next meeting, to be sent out after Christmas.

6. Contribution of conservation translocations to biodiversity targets (AC)

A Phase 1 review and report were commissioned and conducted by Footprint Ecology and Ecorys to assess the contribution of conservation translocations to government biodiversity targets. Robbie MacDonald (Office for Environmental Protection) and Martin Gaywood (NatureScot) have been asked to peer-review this report.

Phase 2 of this work needs to demonstrate to government the influence and contribution of conservation translocations and to translate the evidence into policy-relevant recommendations.

Action

- Working group to develop scope for Phase 2

7. Decision making tools – Phase 2 (JE)

Phase Two will create additional materials, completing the decision-making process cycle, and conduct a review of the Phase One modules. The importance of making these materials accessible to people as a general introduction to each subject as well as providing more in depth training to practitioners was emphasized.

All materials are endorsed by the IUCN Conservation Translocation Specialist Group (CTSG) and will be hosted on CTSG website initially until the online hub goes live. Being globally accessible, this demonstrates the value of Taskforce work *beyond* the national border.

Action:

- JE to scope Phase 2 of work

8. Rapid Updates

8.1 Online Hub (MG)
Phase 1 scoping was delivered in March 2026. The proposal for Phase 2 is being finalised and will be completed by March 2027. This will include a further round of stakeholder engagement (building trust and transparency), finalising the design for hub itself, and funding considerations for next phase (e.g. technical build, population of the site itself, and ongoing maintenance).

8.2 Systematic Review of conservation translocation guidance (SD)
The Natural England Evidence Synthesis Team are working on this. Next steps are to publish as a Power BI tool and report.

8.3 Conservation introduction framework and guidance (SD)
A list of species has been generated to test the framework and guidance document. This was done using Defra climate and suitability maps and the Threatened Species Recovery Actions and Section 41 lists, identifying those that may require translocation in some way. A final list of about 15 species was proposed. The next step is to finalise the framework and guidance in November.

8.4 CT Database (SD/IP)
The database has been built and prepared for 'soft' launch. It now requires a review by the steering group. SD is looking for funding for a research assistant to help with stakeholder engagement, such as working with target organisations to populate the database in pre-release and its early phase post-release, noting that the database is to be seen as a working platform.

Actions:

- SD to produce a 'help manual' for users including, for example, where it is being used to view registered CTs regionally, or to register own project.
- Explore integrating the database with the Natural England licence and scoping forms (IP)

8.5 Proposed PaCT workshop on social outcomes of conservation translocations (JM)
JM is planning a one-day workshop with members of the People and Conservation Translocations network (PaCT), to bring together practitioners and researchers with experience of the social dimensions of conservation translocations. The workshop will focus on monitoring and evaluating social outcomes of conservation translocations, including before, during and after projects

Action: JM to circulate a proposal document for the workshop with view to seeking funding from the Taskforce.

9. Member updates

Holkham Estate (JF)
JF suggests the Taskforce consider the subject of natural colonisations.

Forestry England (AS)
The white-tailed eagle releases on Exmoor have gone well and the golden eagle project is recruiting staff. Elsewhere, the team is working through feasibility of pine marten and wildcat and a fungi translocation document requires peer review. The Ennerdale beaver reintroduction project is looking to apply for a licence.

University of Leeds (GH)
Gabriel Rowland will soon be opening a survey on illicit reintroductions to support his PhD. GH is also conducting work on the concept of 'social cascades' as a parallel to trophic cascade. A new urban beaver study group is emerging, which Elliot Newton (Citizen Zoo) is leading on.

Vincent Wildlife Trust (JM)
No updates.

NatureScot/University of Highlands and Islands (MG)
The 4th International Conservation Translocation Conference was held in Edinburgh on the 7-9 September. An online resource of abstracts and posters presented at the conference is being planned. The Scotland Wildcat Strategy has just been published, which is the co-production of 25 organisations and stakeholders. AC highlighted pleasure at recognising several Taskforce members in attendance and states that he received good feedback on the Taskforce's work and contributions in the conservation translocation space. AC also praised the breadth of material at conference.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (MF)
MF reported that the Natural England Species Recovery Programme projects will be continuing with lady slipper orchid and fringe gentian. A PhD is soon starting on red helleborine.

DEFRA (WS)
The beaver long-term management plan is currently undergoing targeted stakeholder review. A research project on coexistence in white-tailed eagles is looking at lessons learned and the next steps/policy support required going forwards. The golden eagle project provides a good example of cross-agency working and is going well.

University of York (JTM)
JTM has produced a proposal for research on nature-based solutions and wildfires, and coral reef reintroduction.

Liverpool John Moore's University (SD)
No updates.

National Trust (BM)
The National Trust is supporting the RBG Kew projects on red helleborine and fringe gentian, and is looking to do an audit of species reintroduction on NT sites.

RSPB (MS)
The RSPB is leading on several Species Recovery Programme projects, including on black tailed godwit. RSPB sites are also hosting a variety of conservation translocations, including the wild release of beaver. Lessons are being learned from a reintroduction attempt of the speckled footman moth.

IUCN/Zoological Society of London (JE)
There are multiple Species Recovery Programme projects that focus around conservation translocation including Montagu's harrier, glutinous snail, great bustard and whorled snail. There will be a two-day symposium at ZSL in November on rescuing threatened species into captivity from the wild.

Natural England (JS/ZA/JEa)
A BIAZA blog was published this week; they have launched a set of principles to distil the English Code for reintroductions for members of the public.

Next meeting:
The next Taskforce meeting will be held in Kielder, Northumberland, on the 25-26 November 2026.