

Meeting Notes- Wildlife Group meeting 22nd July (15:00am-17:00pm) via Zoom

Attendees- Juliet Caldwell (LINK), Paul Walton (RSPB), Helen Taylor (RZSS), Arina Russell (Woodland Trust), Isobel Mercer (RSPB), Patrick McGlinchey (RSPB), Natalie Stevenson (Buglife), Amber Connett (CIEEM)

Chaired by – Paul Walton (RSPB Scotland)

Apologies – Katie O'Donnell (KSB), Darryl Cox (Bumblebee CT), Bruce Wilson (SWT)

Summary of Actions for 22nd July Wildlife Group meeting

Action No.	Action	To be actioned by	Status
1.	Ask Deborah if we can organise a meeting with Francesca Osowska (NatureScot) and Kate Turton (Scottish Government) to discuss NGO involvement in the next Scottish Biodiversity Strategy.	Juliet	August
2.	Check with Deborah what she is expecting the Green Recovery group's positive effects of biodiversity briefing to cover.	Isobel and Juliet	August

1. General Updates

a. Acceptance of Previous Minutes & Review of Actions

Quinquennial Review of schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act

- There have been growing concerns about the latest Quinquennial Review of schedules 5 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. The proposal is to update the schedules that list species which have protection from being killed to only include those listed as critically endangered or in danger on the IUCN Red List for GB. This means a great many species will no longer be protected under the legislation.
- Froglife published a [joint letter](#) to JNCC which LINK supported.
- WCL lead on a joint letter from ELUK that was sent to Gemma Harper, the CEO of JNCC.
- Richard Benwell at WCL sent Juliet the note from the meeting with JNCC. Apparently it was a constructive meeting, with JNCC making reassuring and collaborative overtures, but no definite conclusions to share yet.
- There will be a follow up consultation in September. Paul heard from officials that they did not realise the changes would be so controversial. The whole thing will be hauled in and relevant decision makers are now involved – this first stage which closed in July is going to be seen as an informal data gathering exercise. Next consultation – later this year/early next year – will involve some principles & mechanism. Apparently this will be co-designed with NGOs.

NatureScot Edinburgh Process Webinar

- Paul presented at NatureScot's webinar on 24th June. He discussed the importance of the Biodiversity Intactness Index, State of Nature report and the need legally binding targets for nature. There was small LINK representation attending.
- Haven't heard anymore from Des Thompson at NatureScot on NatureScot/RBGE events on COP15/Edi Declaration. The Edinburgh Declaration has over 120 signatures.

b. Meetings Attended

- Isobel met with Matthew Bird and Sue Campbell from the Scottish Government Biodiversity team. They chatted about the commitment to protect 30x30 and there were general comments around the SBS. Isobel raised concerns that if COP15 gets delayed it delays the biodiversity strategy process. They are sympathetic to this, because it is a strategy for Scotland, and we should know the actions that will be needed before that 12 month period is up. They thought the SBS might be a high level long term vision – a subsequent action or delivery plan. We need to pick up key messages in LINK work, such as the SBS needs to be an immediate action plan. Isobel mentioned nature targets which they seemed warm to the conversation and asked whether they thought the framework to the Environment Bill was any good.
- Patrick met with Mairi Gougeon which was a positive meeting but still no commitment on targets. He met with Jim Fairlie, who sits on the rural affairs committee and highlighted there is a lot of work to be done there. He is a former farmer, member of NFU. He also met with Mercedes, who is good to work with is keen to get involved with environmental organisations. RSPB has a trip planned with Patrick Harvie, Lorna Slater and Gillian McKay to discuss how the talks are going with the SNP. RSPB has a program of visits with MSPs.
- Reform Scotland will be publishing a blog towards targets in Anne McCall's name.
- Arina is considering offering hedgerows to Jim Fairlie to champion as he is a farmer.
- Arina has met 2 civil servants from NatureScot, one of them the native woodland lead. Arina has also had several meetings with Colin Edwards, Environmental Policy Advisor at Scottish Forestry. Duncan spoke about commercial forestry and cultivation on peatlands and soils - Andrew Weatherall has also been looking into from RSPB – and deer. Ploughing on peaty soils, cultivation, disturbing carbon stores etc. is being dealt with by Scottish Forestry but the piece of guidance they are threatening to publish guidance has still not been published – the idea is to force the two CEOs of Scottish Forestry and NatureScot to have a meeting with each other. They spoke of deer and the ongoing conflict within NatureScot – they are championing fencing rather than managing deer.
- Duncan Stone (NatureScot) was part of a report on missed opportunity for ancient woods. This includes big grant schemes for commercial forestry and how native woodlands is declining. LINK Woodland Group used this report on forestry grant schemes for nature woods - expanding & restoring native woods.
- Arina met with Rachael Hamilton MSP, Shadow Cabinet Minister for Rural Affairs for Conservatives - she was confused under remit of the two committees (net zero and rural affairs) and where forestry sits, native woodlands land use strategy etc.
- Helen – RZSS still waiting to hear about the release of the licensing return report from NatureScot on the beavers – meant to be released around the same time as the consensus report in Tayside.

2. Update on biodiversity process

a. Post 2020 biodiversity delivery

- We have heard nothing about NGO involvement in the planning of the next SBS. We still have the Strategic Projects Alliance which designs the main elements of the delivery plan. We don't have the working relationship with key SG officials. There needs to be mutual common ground of helping each other deliver for nature.

- Paul attended a Royal Society and Royal Society of Edinburgh Conservation Connections meeting which was disappointing. There was a senior official who was hostile to the whole biodiversity agenda.
- Patrick raised the issue of a wider issue within local authorities. They do pieces of small scale work on biodiversity but there isn't enough education on it. Questions of how we help local authority officers and how can this be tied to the biodiversity duty?
- There is a new [draft of the CBD post-2020 biodiversity framework](#). This is the first update to the draft since August 2020. There are some big concerns but also some movement forward. They have published the [new proposed headline indicators](#).
- There has been recent [PQ to Mairi McAllan](#) from Monica Lennon on whether the SG was considering nature targets. The Scottish Government are still rejecting the idea.

b. Nature Positive/Biodiversity Net Gain workshop

- It was discussed whether a workshop/webinar at the start of September would be useful for members to develop an understanding of concepts Nature Positive/BNG/Positive effects for biodiversity and how it fits into the LINK working groups. The workshop would involve two presentations from RSPB and CIEEM on their existing work on nature positive actions (such as BNG, Environmental Net Gain etc.)
- The Green Recovery are looking into writing a briefing on net gain, which the workshop should inform. Isobel and Juliet to find out more from Deborah about what the briefing will cover.
- Confusion in the group with how naturally the concepts Nature Positive and Biodiversity Net Gain sit together and whether the workshop will be helpful. Nature Positive is an overarching global concept. Biodiversity Net Gain is more specific which can be applied to individual actions and developments. Question over whether the workshop should be more specific to one of the concepts.
- Question over whether the Planning Group are doing any work on positive effects for biodiversity?
- It was noted that Scot Gov haven't mentioned it and therefore it is unclear what it looks like for Scotland.
- [A Nature-Positive World: The Global Goal for Nature](#)

3. Update on targets work

a. CBD COP15 update

- SPICe CBD COP15 briefing will be published mid to late August.
- CBD COP15 will be cancelled for October but hasn't been officially announced. It will be rescheduled for Spring 2022. The Scottish Government (SG) committed to producing the next Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) within 12 months after COP15. The group are concerned this will take us into the middle of 2023 – 1/3 of the way to 2030. RSPB considering producing a reactive statement if the SG announce a delay in the next SBS.

b. Parliamentary Roadshow

- The event was successful with great [presentations](#) from Calum Duncan, Ariel Brunner, Georgina Chandler and Debbie Bassett.
- 7 MSPs attended and will be sent SPICe briefing on CBD COP15 when it's ready.

c. 30x30

- Isobel had meeting with SG biodiversity team on 30x30. Early stages in their thinking on this and will be kickstarting it after summer. This is an opportunity for us to get the word out first – via the LINK briefing.

Isobel shared what we would like to count towards 30% and they thought it was sensible. NatureScot carried out a protected areas review from last year.

- On site condition monitoring, NatureScot's Scientific Advisory Committee were commissioned to form a sub-group to look into recommendations for a new monitoring system. Their report is here: [Report to the Scientific Advisory Committee by the Sub-group reviewing on land monitoring and surveillance by NatureScot | NatureScot](#) NatureScot staff are now looking into how the recommendations can be implemented and will be trialling a three-tiered approach to monitoring.

LINK 30x30 paper

- 15 organisations have signed up. The paper will be published next week 28th July – World Nature Conservation Day.
- Vhairi, Juliet and Isobel are organising a meeting with Ben Ross, Head of Protected Areas at NatureScot, to discuss their thinking/plans on 30x30 in Scotland. Still waiting on confirmation for a date.
- There is a short summary of the 30x30 paper for MSPs. We will ask MSPs to ask PQs after recess and once we've had the meeting with NatureScot and scoped out what Scot Gov's plans are.

ELUK 30x30 paper – aligning the principles – kept quite high level

- Target officers working on a joint ELUK 30x30 paper using the briefings from each Link. This will be kept high level.
- Juliet, Link target officers and Isobel have a meeting organised with Bev Nichols, Head of Nature Conservation Policy and Advice at JNCC to discuss 30x30 on 18th August. Bev leads the team which oversees many of JNCC's interactions with the 4 countries of the UK and in particular working with the 4 countries on joint working post-COP15.

4. Nature Champions

- 41 champions signed up and there are 15 MSPs who have expressed an interest. Juliet will send a newsletter end of August/Start of September.
- Arina and Bruce have taken Rachael Hamilton (riparian woodland champion) on a site visit & SWT had a meeting with Alexander Burnett (red squirrel champion).

5. AOB