

England Species Reintroductions Taskforce

Date and time: Thursday 6 February 2025, 09:00-13:00 + LJMU speed talks 14:00-15:30

Venue: Roscoe Boardroom, Egerton Court, 2 Rodney St, Liverpool L1 2UA

Attendees: Andy Clements (Chair), Sarah Dalrymple, Geoff Hilton, Ben McCarthy, Delphine Pouget, Karim Vahed, George Holmes, Rachel Gardner, Mike Fay, Jenny MacPherson, Martin Lines, Julia Touza, Mike Shurmer, Will Stinson, Jeremy Sabel (Secretariat)

Online: Jake Fiennes, John Ewen, Mina Patel (Secretariat)

Guests: Beth Brockett (Forest Research – in person), Catherine Whatley (Nature Soc – in person), Nature Scot (online): Martin Gaywood & Kat O'Brien

Apologies: Andrew Stringer

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. Access Taskforce

Introduction from Beth Brockett – introducing the ACCESS Taskforce [ACCESS | Impact](#) who are hoping to showcase our use of social sciences and will conduct interviews with some of our members.

3. Sub-group updates

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

3.1 Barriers and enablers

Delphine Pouget updated the Taskforce that the sub-group met on 05.02.25 to finalise edits to the barriers and enablers report and policy brief. This report will be sent for peer-review and then a workshop will be held on 06.03.25 for the Taskforce to plan how we take the recommendations forward.

3.2 Predator guild assessment

Julia Touza gave some thoughts on how this study might be taken forward including expanding the survey, analysing the quality of the evidence in the literature, a deeper investigation of social acceptability criteria, using inter sectoral cluster results to seek common ground amongst stakeholders, stating whether some species are easier to introduce than others and/or an analysis of geographical variations in viewpoints.

3.3 Database

Sarah Dalrymple presented progress including work with the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH) who have been commissioned to develop a prototype database for conservation translocations that will be user-friendly and allow downloads and reporting.

3.4 Assisted colonisation framework

Sarah Dalrymple presented progress on developing the framework and members had a wide ranging discussion to help finesse this workstream.

3.5 Practitioner's workshop

Delphine Pouget updated progress on developing this workshop with the intention of bringing key stakeholders closer together.

3.6 Online hub, publishing reports and peer review

Applied Ecology Resources (AER) may be able to host an online hub for the Taskforce, including the database in development and publication of Taskforce reports.

All peer review invites have been sent out and accepted. The Taskforce has an international panel of 8 experts to peer review its reports:

- Associate Professor Thomas Abeli – Plant Ecologist, Università di Pavia, Italy
- Dr Matthew Albrecht – Director, Center for Conservation & Sustainable Development, Missouri Botanical Garden, USA
- Dr Stefano Canessa – Conservation Biologist, Institute for Ecology and Evolution, Universität Bern, Switzerland
- Dr Sarah Crowley – Senior Lecturer in Human & Animal Geography, Centre for Geography and Environmental Science, University of Exeter (Cornwall), UK
- Professor Lynn Dicks – Ecologist, Conservation Research Institute and Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge, UK
- Dr Martin Gaywood – Species Projects Manager, NatureScot & Senior Researcher, University of the Highlands and Islands, UK
- Dr Sandrine Godefroid – Research Scientist, Meise Botanic Garden, Belgium
- Professor Robbie McDonald – Chief Scientist, Office for Environmental Protection, UK

Actions

- Finalise barriers and enablers report (GH, Filippo Marino, DP, AC and JS)
- Send both barriers and enablers and predator guild reports for peer review (AC/JS)
- A workshop is planned for 06.03.25 for the Taskforce to plan how we take some of the recommendations in the barriers and enablers report forward (Barriers & enablers subgroup)
- Aim to publish above two reports and the barriers and enablers policy brief in April (AC/JS)
- Taskforce to decide if and how we take forward the predator guild work (AC/DP/JS)
- Database subgroup to meet in March to advise on prototype database (Hub & database subgroup)
- Consider changing the ‘conservation translocation project scoping form’ on Gov.uk to enable better data collection for the database (SD, DP, JS)
- Meeting of the Assisted Colonisation subgroup on 28.02.25 to assist with the development of the Assisted Colonisation Framework development (SD)
- Practitioners workshop to go ahead 27.02.25 with several Taskforce members attending.
- Discuss publication of reports on AER with Philip Dooner (AC)
- Add peer review panel to .gov.uk (JS) and send out thanks and acknowledgement to all peer reviewers (AC)

4. Focus on less charismatic taxa

Delphine Pouget updated the Taskforce on the discussions held by some members on 16.01.25. There was acceptance that ‘less charismatic’ is not the correct term for taxa that tend to not hit the headlines (invertebrates, plants, mosses, fungi etc...) but that we need to seek opportunities to highlight conservation translocations of all taxa as there is appetite from the public and it stimulates informed debate.

Actions:

- RG to share influential species report once finalised. AS/RG can write a blog based on this report.
- KV to do a talk to FarmED, 03.04.25 and to write a blog around same subject.
- All to write and share articles, blogs and other content regarding these taxa and to seek opportunities for talks at external events

5. Stakeholder engagement and future priorities

Delphine Pouget presented a summary of feedback from stakeholder sessions and members discussed how to take these forward.

Actions:

- Hold a session at the next Taskforce meeting on 'species recovery, where do CTs fit in?' and invite James Phillips, MS, RG and BM to present their organisations' strategies and priorities.
- Lead discussions on themes highlighted in previous stakeholder feedback such as (i) how conservation translocations can contribute to biodiversity targets and (ii) how to make best use of green finance; with a mixture of stakeholders that we have already engaged (AC, DP, JS)
- Engage with other stakeholders e.g. trees, genetics, marine (AC, DP, JS)
- Engage with www.Peersfortheplanet.org (AC, DP, ML)
- We also need to list the issues and invite stakeholders to discuss and resolve them where possible (AC) e.g. the role of zoos; building trust between regulators, practitioners and the public; priority species lists; and measures of success.

6. Looking forward

Andy Clements said that the Taskforce looks like it will have its initial 3 year term extended by a further 3 years and that Defra have indicated they would like Andy to continue as Chair. He will accept and is delighted to be able to stay on. Andy will be working on the Year 2 Report for the Taskforce and will write to all members continuity of the Taskforce as we approach the end of the first term in autumn 2025.

Actions:

- Draft Year 2 report by end of February (AC)
- Write to all members re continuity on the Taskforce (AC)

7. Member updates

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

- WWT involved in White-tailed eagle work in Wales. Paper due in Animal Conservation about headstarted Black-tailed Godwits and another paper due in Conservation Biology about when and why you should headstart wading birds.
- Buglife involved in discussions with ZSL Whipsnade about medicinal leaches and white-clawed crayfish and with Wildwood Trust and Restore about a conservation breeding centre for invertebrates including swallow-tailed butterfly, tadpole shrimp and glow worms. Ongoing work with narrow-headed ant (Devon) and wart-biter cricket (Sussex).
- Nature Friendly Farming Network – focussing on changing mindsets championing the benefits of nature and food growing side by side e.g. biodiversity/pest management, flooding mitigation etc...
- University of York – working with Forest Research on assisted colonisation – seed provenance in forest sector. Working on Biodiversity Net Gain – how to incentivize species with different incentives across different areas of the UK.
- RSPB – internal Translocation Advisory Group 2024 report provides an update on activity and engagement. RSPB continues to be engaged and feeding into a range of projects, of note are those involving non-avian species including white-faced darter (Cumbria) and in Scotland: beaver, wildcat, pine hoverfly; and Wales: shore dock.
- Forestry England – planning for future of 'Wilding' programme. Influential species review has been commissioned to focus on ecosystem engineers which will guide next steps. Project officer recruited for wildcat in Kielder and a partner in the SW wildcat project. Pine Marten releases in Cumbria and Two Moors Project and trying to understand

metapopulation across the rest of the country. Wood ant translocations planned from Cropton (Yorks) to Ennerdale (Cumbria) – experimental design to extrapolate across the country. Feasibility for golden eagle recovery across the country near completion.

- University of Leeds – blog on illicit and unregulated responses (Taskforce LinkedIn), article in The Conversation, and BBC 5 Live radio interview at time of illegal lynx releases in the Cairngorms. One of the illicit reintroductions PhDs was not successful but still waiting to hear on the other one. Attending conference on rewilding/reintroductions in Germany in March.
- National Trust – still working on same suite of species as previously reported and just about to launch threatened species programme.
- Natural England – held useful workshop at rewilding conference in Cambridge in January on barriers and enablers/challenges and opportunities. Forestry England and the Taskforce also presented at this conference.
- Vincent Wildlife Trust - Pine Martens released in Devon, [press release](#) with Forestry Land Scotland have done over 100 translocations of Pine Martens in 10 years.
- Kew – attended IUCN leaders meeting in Dubai – spoke to Axel Moehrensclager who was very enthusiastic about what the Taskforce is carrying out – possibilities for engaging? Native debates – Yew, Rockrose, Lady's Slipper.
- LJMU – paper with Sandrine Godefroid in Journal of Applied Ecology using Centre for Applied Ecology dataset about the state of play re conservation translocations in Europe – 3,011 attempts.
- ZSL – UK species team have commitment for 17 acres of land for a UK native species centre at Whipsnade. Red squirrel report due – strategy for UK. Re plants – botanic gardens should be a focus, not just zoos as a [recent study](#) concluded there is little evidence that botanical gardens and arboreta are managing to conserve threatened plants within collections on a global scale, despite accelerating rates of elevated extinction risk.
- NatureScot – species at risk database published: <https://www.nature.scot/species-risk> - not a priority list. Wildcats have been found in pheasant pens – land manager relationships affected – repercussions for licensing – very complex. Wildcat strategy will be published later on in the year. The illegal attempts at Lynx reintroductions were not well received by many so some consensus and positive take aways. International beaver symposium later on in the year as well as the British beaver conference for British practitioners. Nature Restoration funds projects – RBGE outplanting of 10 plant species inc. yellow marsh saxifrage, wych elm, oblong woodsia etc... and RZSS releasing invertebrates such as medicinal leech, pine hoverfly, pond mud snail etc... Cairngorms Connect Predator Project here: [Cairngorms Connect | Predator Project](#)
- NatureScot - mud reservoir moss project – species due to become protected by Sch 8 – Scottish Water now worried about implications for them in terms of what works they want carry out on the reservoir! Emphasizes issues of trust are important.

Dates and location for next meeting: Thursday 12th June, Papley Grove Farm – Cambridgeshire