

**MINUTES OF THE BRITISH ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY
PUBLIC AND POLICY COMMITTEE**
14.00 – 17.00, Thursday 7 May 2009
Quaker Meeting House, London

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Present were: Jeff Bale; Peter Carey (Chair); Colin Hindmarch; Steve Sait, Jennifer Shay. In attendance were: Becky Allen (Press Officer); Jonathan Hall (Policy and Communications Assistant); Ceri Margerison (Policy Officer); Hazel Norman (Executive Director). Fay Collier (2008 BES POST Fellow) attended as a guest of the Committee.

Apologies were received from: Lesley Batty; Kathryn Monk; Dan Osborn; Andrew Pullin; Tim Rotheray; Carly Stevens and Kate Trumper.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 FEBRUARY 2009

The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting. The actions from the meeting were addressed in turn. Actions six and seven would be prepared by Committee members for the next meeting of BES Council. Dr Norman would check whether action 19 had been completed. **(Action: all responsible for outstanding actions)**

In relation to action number two, the Chair had spoken to Dr Bridget Emmett at CEH Bangor, who had suggested that adaptation to climate change was a key concern for policy-makers in Wales. This would be followed up in discussion with Havard Prosser and Kathryn Monk. **(Action: CM)**

3. COMMITTEE MATTERS

- *Planning for October meeting with ACES and Scottish Government*

Following the February meeting of PPC, the Policy Officer had been in contact with Dr Davy McCracken, University of Aberdeen, who had been extremely helpful in facilitating contact with the Knowledge Scotland partnership. As a result, the BES would host a drinks reception on the evening of 8 October to close the 7 – 8 October Knowledge Scotland meeting. Professor Charles Godfray, President-elect of the BES, would deliver a brief speech.

The Policy Officer would follow-up with ACES in order to ascertain whether ACES still wished to be involved. Professor Maggie Gill could be asked to deliver a speech on behalf of ACES. **(Action: CM)**

PPC would meet in the afternoon of 8 October at the Macdonald Hotel, Holyrood. Following the meeting, members would make their way to Dynamic Earth; the location of the reception. Finally, the Chair of PPC and selected members of the BES would return to the Macdonald Hotel for a private dinner with the Scottish Environment Minister. The Minister's attendance was yet to be confirmed. The Policy Officer would keep members updated as to progress. **(Action: CM)**

PPC members requiring a hotel room were urged to contact the Policy Officer as soon as possible. **(Action: all)**

PPC lacked a member from Scotland. PPC would actively seek representatives from the devolved nations to sit on the Committee in future.

- *Developing an ethical policy for the BES: update (Tim Rotheray and Lesley Batty)*

The Committee thanked Tim Rotheray and Lesley Batty, in their absence, for preparing the ethical policy document. Further work would be required to define partnerships in more detail: for example it was not clear whether, if the BES entered into partnership with an 'umbrella' organisation such as UKBRAG, the Society would need to evaluate the activities of every member of this body.

The Committee discussed the BES's position as a 'lobbying' or a 'campaigning' organisation. A point would be added to the ethical policy to state that BES Officers should not use this title in any lobbying activities they may undertake, or speak on behalf of the Society, unless sanctioned to do so.

With regards to assessing the carbon emissions of organisations with which the BES deals, the policy document should be amended to state that the BES will 'have regard to current knowledge.....' when making its decision, as advances in understanding would alter the benchmarks for acceptable levels of emissions.

A point could be added regarding mitigation: is the Society working with partners who are trying to mitigate their own environmental impacts?

Partnership-working could be an opportunity for each partner to educate the other: for example, the BES could learn from an industrial partner and vice versa. The document should be amended to reflect this point.

It would be useful for the BES to adapt its ethical policy based on that developed by another, similar, organisation. The Chair would consult Roger Mitchell, Arcadia Trust, for advice, before contacting Tim and Lesley to refine the document (**Action: PC, TR and LB**). The Chair would update Professors Press and Godfray on the Committee's progress in developing the policy (**Action: PC**)

- *Evaluation of proposals for the 2009 Public Engagement Grant*

PPC agreed to fund the proposals by Stephen Walsh (2634-3213) and by Michael Pocock (2325-3219), which were given the highest scores by Committee members.

Because Walsh and Pocock were so strong, the Committee decided to divert £500 from the 2009 Ecology into Policy grant and so provide full funding for both proposals. The BES Grants Officer would be informed. (**Action: CM**)

Many applications were received from Nepal. Although the Committee could not commit to funding these, due to limited funds (£3000) available this year, they felt that Shankar's proposal (1877 – 3037), to build a new tourism centre, was strongest. DFID would be contacted to ascertain whether 'matched funding' was being offered to Nepalese ecologists who could secure money from a British institution. (**Action: PC, CM, DO**)

A number of applications were purely concerned with raising 'environmental' awareness, and not specifically about the science of ecology. PPC also commented that changing the application form to specify that applicants must give details of the methods they proposed to use for their projects, would help to tease out those applications which were stronger than others.

The application deadline would be moved backwards by one month to allow members of the Committee to see applications from candidates further in advance of the meeting: the numbers of applications received had made finding time to score these difficult. (**Action: CM**)

- *Risk Register (Hazel Norman)*

PPC was asked to consider whether the risks for which the Committee was responsible should be amended: removed from

the list, down or up-graded in seriousness or new risks added.

- 1) Providing poor or incorrect information: risk to remain the same
- 2) Failure to influence policy: a high priority for the Society and one that reflects the Council's wishes that the BES seek to influence policy. Responding to consultations and directly meeting with policy-makers should remain foci. The risk was downgraded from four to three.
- 3) Failure to make members feel properly represented: this risk would comprised two parts:
 - a) *The risk of not engaging the majority of members*
 - b) *The risk of not adequately communicating the Society's policy work to members*

Risk a) was analogous to the description currently within the Risk Register and the rating for this would remain the same. Risk b) would be added as a new component of the Register: a probability of three and impact, two, would be assigned to this risk.

The Policy Team would prepare and disseminate a regular newsletter regarding the Society's policy and public engagement activities, which would help to keep members engaged and informed (**Action: CM, JH**).

- 4) Other organisations asked policy questions: risk to remain the same.
- 5) Substantial changes in education curriculum and/ or science/ environmental policy: the economic recession poses two risks – that the importance of the environment will slip down the public and political agenda and that the BES will fail to capitalise on opportunities provided by a potential shift to a 'green new deal'. As written, the risk would remain at its current level, but the Chair would generate a form of words to elucidate these new challenges.
(**Action: PC**)

Becky Allen expressed concern that there were areas of the Risk Register against which the Press Officer was mentioned but where responsibility for these risks lay with another BES Committee. PPC is the only Committee to which the Press Officer is responsible. Becky would send the Policy Officer comments on the relevant risks and PPC would communicate this to other BES Committees. (**Action: BA, CM**)

4. PRESS

- *Press Report and Forward Plan from Becky Allen.*

A number of recent papers from the BES Journals had performed very well, generating much media coverage; particularly in Australia.

- *BES activities at the British Science Festival 2009*
 - o *Update*
 - o *Communications Strategies*

The Press and Policy Officers informed the Committee that the Communications Strategies were on track and deadlines were being met. PPC was asked to comment on the Communications Strategies for the panel discussion and performance of Re:Design at the BSA Science Festival. The better the pre-publicity and promotion for the events, the more tickets we can sell and interest we can generate.

The Committee suggested that engaging with the following to promote the event could prove useful:

- English Garden magazine
- WWF, based in Godalming, Surrey
- Silwood Park (Imperial College London)
- National Trust local groups: links might be possible through Professor Malcolm Press, BES President

- Local church groups & Guildford Cathedral
- Local gardening clubs/ allotment societies
- Local history groups/local history magazine
- Jodrell Laboratory at Kew Gardens: Fay Collier to provide contact **(Action: FC)**
- School of Horticulture at Kew Gardens
- Natural History Museum
- Royal Holloway

The Policy Officer would investigate the capacity of the venue for the panel discussion. **(Action: CM)**

The Policy Officer would create a 'Wiki' to enable the sharing of resources between the organisations involved in planning the events at the British Science Festival: the Darwin Correspondence Project, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, RHS, and interested members of PPC. **(Action: CM)**

- *Planning for the centenary, and press briefing on 2010 biodiversity target*

Dr Norman informed members that the Centenary Working Group last met in September 2008. It was possible that a meeting would take place at the BES Annual Meeting in Hatfield. Any ideas on possible centenary activities should be sent to Dr Norman. **(Action: all)**

The Committee agreed that a press briefing on 'biodiversity' at the Science Media Centre would be an excellent opportunity to position BES members as reliable spokespeople in advance of activities in 2010 around the biodiversity target. Experts in both international and British/ UK biodiversity would be sought.

The following BES members were proposed: Rosie Hails; Juliet Vickery; Ian Owens or Tim Blackburn (Silwood); Jeremy Thomas; Georgina Mace; Bill Sutherland; Steve Ormerod; Dave Rafaelli; Guy Duke; Alistair Fitter and Graham Tucker.

The Policy and Communications Assistant would approach these individuals to seek their participation in an autumn media briefing **(Action: JH)**. The Press Officer would make the necessary arrangements with the Science Media Centre **(Action: BA)**

5. SCIENCE POLICY

- *Science Policy Report*

Members thanked Jonathan Hall for preparing an excellent and comprehensive summary of current policy news.

Although the BES would not prepare a formal response to the Defra consultation on set-aside, it would be useful to seek an update from those members of the BES who attended the related workshop: Richard Piewell and Matt Heard **(Action: CM, JH)**.

Professor Malcolm Press had received a letter from the Linnean Society to invite the BES to work with the Linnean on a reply to the Government's response to the House of Lords Systematics and Taxonomy study. The Chair would arrange a meeting with the Linnean Society to discuss this, and the Policy Officer would investigate whether the Institute of Biology (with whom the BES co-operated to produce our original submission to the Inquiry) had also received a request from the Linnean **(Action, PC, CM)**.

Members commented that it would be very useful for the BES to maintain a list of current policies in which we were engaged and interested. The IEEM already held a similar list and the Policy Officer would investigate whether it would be possible to

access this (**Action: CM**).

The Policy Officer informed the Committee that Rebecca Ross, University of Oxford, had been selected as the 2009 POST Fellow. Rebecca would produce a POSTnote on pollinators, subject to approval from the POST Board.

- *Feedback from Natural Capital Initiative Symposium*

The NCI symposium had been a success, with many positive comments from attendees. 200 participants attended day one of the symposium, with workshops on days two and three also well attended. 108 of the delegates on day one had paid for places, with the remainder sponsored places.

Certain constituents were clearly missing: representatives from the Treasury; Government Departments other than Defra; third sector; planners; business – although Tesco, Centrica and Eurostar had been represented amongst the speakers.

The event was delivered on-budget and £100,000 sponsorship was raised; a major achievement given the recession. The symposium report would be available shortly.

The next challenge was to capitalise on the positive sentiment and momentum behind the NCI and move forwards, with a range of exciting and influential activities. Two projects were already being planned: an event focused on 'ecosystems and health', and a spring 2010 workshop bringing ecologists and economists together: the BES would play an active role in each.

The Institute of Biology, Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the BES would need to negotiate a new partnership agreement if the NCI were to move forwards. Dr Norman stressed the need to see clear aims and objectives for the partnership before the BES Council could sign this. This would be fed back to the Steering Group (**Action: CM**)

- *Plans for Natural Capital Initiative Evening Event, 15 June 2009*

Plans for the evening event were progressing well. The event provided an opportunity for the BES to form links with organisations it might not customarily work with: Local Authorities, planners, architects and others. A small poster display would enable young (PhD) ecologists to demonstrate work related to the delivery of ecosystem services and maintenance of biodiversity in urban environments.

The Policy Officer would circulate a flyer to PPC, advertising the event. Members were encouraged to disseminate this widely and to register for free tickets themselves (**Action: CM, all**).

- *BES – NERC Policy Training Workshop, 19 – 20 May, Reading*

Interest in the workshop had been high and 31 participants; BES members and NERC-funded researchers, had been selected to take part. The majority were early-career researchers (no more than ten years since PhD) with a number of PhD students also involved. If the workshop were a success, the BES could consider facilitating such a session annually.

6. PROJECTS

- *To report on progress organising Parliamentary Reception with the IEEM*

The reception would be hosted by Lord Selborne, with Pavan Sukhdev (TEEB review) agreeing to speak. Professor

Charles Godfray, President-elect of the BES, would also deliver a brief introduction to the BES. A letter to Huw Irranca-Davies, Parliamentary under secretary at Defra, had been sent and the Policy Officer would follow this up shortly
(Action: CM)

The Policy Team would meet with the Policy Executive from the IEEM on 12 May to draft terms of reference and discuss how to structure the 4 June workshop to draft a position statement. Four members of BES (Mick Green, Rob Brooker, Margaret Palmer and Johanna Forster) would attend the workshop alongside Peter Carey as Chair of PPC. Three members of IEEM, including Steve Ormerod, would also attend.

On 12 May the Policy Team and IEEM would also meet Colin Hindmarch and others from UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum to discuss the Forum's input into the statement and the reception.

Next steps would be to formalise invitation list and send invitations before the summer parliamentary recess. If PPC can suggest key people we should invite that would be welcome **(Action: all)**

Work will then to be done to finalise the position statement over the summer: to go to BES members who expressed an interest for comment, then to PPC to approve.

Consideration also needs to be given to generating press interest: the briefing on biodiversity with the Science Media Centre could be organised to coincide with the parliamentary reception.

- *Planning a joint session with UK BRAG at the BES Annual Meeting*

The Policy Officer was in correspondence with Tina Yates, UKBRAG Secretariat, to draft an email to Professor Bob Watson (Chair of NEA) and Steve Albon (NEA Secretariat) to get date in their diaries and facilitate a meeting later in May to discuss how the session should be structured.

7. ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

- *Update on Wilding*

The Committee was pleased by the standard and tone of the report. A concluding section, summarising the document, was needed, and it would be important to check that the document was as up to date as it could be: many references were from 2007, with only one from 2009.

The document focused on Northern Europe and America: the form of management proposed would not be suitable for Spain or Greece, for example, due to fire risk. It would be important to set the finished document in a wider European context. Colin Hindmarch suggested that Dr Davy McCracken may be able to help here.

The Chair would read the document carefully and send comments back to Dr Hodder and the steering group helping to draft the document: Drs James Bullock and Keith Kirby **(Action: PC)**.

8. AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

- *Update on cohabitation and memorandum of understanding with SEB and Biochemical Society (Hazel Norman)*

The BES had held an Extraordinary General Meeting on 26 March to consider the cohabitation business plan. The BES Council had agreed to the purchase of a building in Roger Street, London, and this decision had been mirrored by the Society for Experimental Biology and the Biochemical Society. Contracts would shortly be exchanged and the sale completed on 1 June. Refurbishment of the new building would be complete by mid-late November.

The new building would incorporate a 120-150 seat auditorium, divisible into a suite of smaller meeting rooms. The two lower floors of the building could be sub-let to other like-minded organisations and the meeting rooms offered for hire.

Dr Norman apologised if she proved difficult to contact over the next few months: the office move would occupy the majority of her time.

- *Progress towards formation of the 'Royal Society of Biology'*

Members noted that the merger between the Institute of Biology and Biosciences Federation was progressing well. A Chief Executive was currently being sought to drive forward the new Society of Biology.

9. AOB

In future, the second PPC meeting of the year would be held in the last week of April: it was hoped that this would be more convenient for members of PPC. The first meeting would remain in the last week of February. The Policy Officer would circulate dates for the 2010 meeting and would notify the Grants Officer **(Action: CM)**

Action	Responsible
Offer assistance to Welsh Assembly Government – via Havard Prosser and Kathryn Monk – regarding climate change adaptation	CM
Contact ACES to follow up involvement in reception in Scotland	CM
Keep members informed regarding arrangements for Scotland meeting and Ministers' attendance	CM
Consult Roger Mitchell, Arcadia Trust, regarding ethical policy and feed comments back to Tim Rotheray and Lesley Batty for action	PC, TR, LB
Update Professors Press and Godfray on development of ethical policy	PC
Notify Grants Officer regarding £3500 available for PEG and £4500 for Ecology into Policy Grant	CM
Contact DFID regarding possible 'matched funding' for Nepalese applicants to PEG	PC, CM, DO
Move PEG deadline back by one month: notify Grants Officer	CM
Prepare and disseminate a regular newsletter to members on Society's policy activities	JH, CM
To send Policy Officer comments on risks for communication to other BES committees	BA, CM
Provide contact details for Jodrell Laboratory at Kew Gardens	FC
Create Wiki to allow information sharing between partners at BSA Festival	CM
Send suggestions for centenary activities to Dr Norman	All
Contact BES members to take part in Science Media Centre briefing: arrange briefing with SMC	JH, BA
Contact Richard Piewell and Matt Heard for update on Defra set-aside workshop	CM
Contact IOB to find out whether an approach has been made from Linnean Society regarding systematics and taxonomy response	CM
Investigate access to IEEM database of current policy	CM
Feed back to the NCI steering group the need for clear aims and objectives in advance of any partnership agreement	CM
Circulate flyer for Sustainable Cities event to PPC, for distribution	CM, All

Follow-up Minister's office regarding attendance at reception on 27 October	CM
To read draft Ecological Issues document and send comments to Dr Hodder and steering group	PC
To set and circulate dates for 2010 Committee meetings	CM