

**THE BRITISH ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY
PUBLIC AND POLICY COMMITTEE**
13.00 – 16.00
Charles Darwin House, London

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Present: Peter Carey (Chair), Jeff Bale, Lesley Batty, Rosie Hails, Colin Hindmarch, Dan Osborn, Andrew Pullin, Tim Rotheray, Jennifer Shay, Carly Stevens. In attendance: Becky Allen, Press Officer, Ceri Margerison, Policy Officer, Hazel Norman, Executive Director and Jenny Oates, Policy Intern.

Apologies were received from Kathryn Monk.

The Chair welcomed Jenny Oates, Policy Intern, to her first meeting of the Committee. Jenny would work with the Policy Officer until the end of April 2010.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 October 2009

The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

Action points were taken in turn. The majority of the actions had been completed. Those outstanding were: Peter Carey to feed back to unsuccessful applicant to 2009 Ecology into Policy Grant (**Action: PC**); Dan Osborn to provide a contact at DFID regarding the availability of matched funding for Nepalese applicants to Public Engagement Grant (**Action: DO**).

Becky Allen updated members on activities undertaken since the last meeting to benchmark the BES's press work against that of other, similar, organisations. Little information had been forthcoming, despite efforts to chase this up: other organisations seemed to conduct press work in a more ad-hoc fashion with little or no recording of the outcomes. Members agreed that this highlighted the strength of the BES's own press activities.

Dr Norman had not spoken to Nick Dusic, Director of CaSE, regarding complimentary hire of the meeting facilities at Charles Darwin House; under the terms of the partnership agreement between the BES, Biochemical Society and Society for Experimental Biology it would not be possible to offer this.

The position statement on 'halting UK biodiversity loss' had been amended by the BES President following the October meeting of PPC, and circulated to Council before launch on 27th October at a parliamentary reception. A protocol had been drafted to govern how future statements would be produced and this would be circulated to PPC for information (**Action: CM**).

Professor Hails had raised the possibility of the Natural Capital Initiative incorporating consideration of physical capital within its remit. Although supportive the steering group had felt that the NCI currently had many ideas for few resources. Dr Osborn suggested that developments in this area might be taking place elsewhere in any case.

3. COMMITTEE MATTERS

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

Members recorded their thanks to Dominic Burton, BES Grants Officer, for his work in compiling and circulating the grant applications to the Committee earlier in the year than usual; this had enabled ten members of the Committee to supply their

scores, a larger number than in previous years.

After considering the collated scores members agreed to fund the following applications:

Sander Den Haring (Application 2860-3560) - £2,000

Friends of Devonshire Road Nature Reserve (Application 2861- 3562) - £500

Bootstrap Company (Application 2864 – 3567) - £500

All members agreed that the project proposed by Sander Den Haring could have wide-reaching impact. It would be useful to secure photographs from the project for wider dissemination; it would also be useful to suggest the use of the BES logo on the materials, such as flipcharts, which would be produced as part of the project. This would be fed back to the BES Grants Officer **(Action: CM)**.

Dominic Burton would be asked to check whether 'Bootstrap Company' was indeed a registered charity. If it was not, £1,000 would instead be allocated to the Friends of Devonshire Road Nature Reserve **(Action: CM)**.

Dr Shay suggested that guidance would be useful for those assessing the grants: a project with many organisations involved would be more likely to secure funding from elsewhere whilst a smaller project may depend solely on the money secured from the BES to proceed. Should smaller projects therefore be favoured over larger?

The Chair informed the Committee that he had met with Dominic Burton to discuss this issue. A proposal was to go to the BES Grants Committee suggesting that if a project was funded by many other organisations BES funding should be used only for a standalone part or a project.

A number of applications had been passed through to the Committee which did not involve public engagement and did not meet the criteria for the grant. The Grants Officer would be informed and asked to implement a more robust screen in 2011 **(Action: CM)**.

Concerns were raised about the standardised applications submitted by applicants from Nepal, even using the same phrases in some cases. It would be useful to find out if matched funding was available: Dan Osborn had earlier been asked to take this forward.

- **PPC Business Plan and Budget**

The BES President had requested that the Policy Officer re-format the PPC budget and this had duly been done. The Chair directed members' attention to the table at the beginning of the budget. This clearly showed that a large proportion of the expenditure of PPC was committed to subscriptions, which could not easily be cut.

The Business Plan now stated clearly the impact of the activities which PPC was funding, and why these activities were taking place.

The Chair asked for an update on the position of Policy Assistant. Dr Norman informed the Committee that Council had agreed to fund the post for one final year, at £5,000, but that in 2011 resources to support the Policy Officer would need to come from within the existing secretariat.

- **PPC Management Accounts and Chair's commentary (*to follow*)**

It had not been possible for the Finance Officer to prepare the Management Accounts so close to the end of the financial year. The Chair had seen a copy of the most recent accounts at a meeting of Finance Board and these suggested that the

Committee was on budget.

The Chair reminded members to submit any outstanding expenses claims for 2009 as soon as possible, before the year-end audit in mid-March (**Action: all**).

- Review of the BES Risk Register (*Dr Hazel Norman*)

The Committee considered in turn each of the risks for which they were responsible:

P6: Substantial changes in education curriculum and/ or science/ environmental policy

The education curriculum and science/ environmental policy would be disaggregated here. Due to the general election and likely change of government, combined with the economic downturn, significant change to science and environmental policy was likely; the probability would therefore be increased from four to five.

P8: Current economic difficulties result in decline in the public's interest in environmental issues

Economic uncertainty meant that the probability should remain the same, at four.

P8: Providing poor/ incorrect information (education or policy)

'Current management of risk' would be amended to reflect the development of a protocol for the development of position statements.

P9: Failure to influence policy

The risk would remain the same. Dr Rotheray suggested that the general election expected in May 2010 offered an opportunity to influence policy if intervention was well timed. Much work had been put in to liaising with Defra and agencies in the past but to influence the new Government's agenda it may be necessary to engage in greater direct lobbying of politicians than in the past.

Dr Hindmarch suggested that there should be an amendment to 'current management of risk' to indicate the BES's involvement in the European Ecological Federation. As this body grew in influence this would provide an opportunity to engage with upstream policy-making in Europe. An 'outstanding action' could be added regarding the need to include Europe in the scope of BES's policy work.

The Chair noted that if the PPC was required to continue to cut its budget, its ability to influence policy would diminish.

P9: Failure to represent members' views to external audiences

The probability would be lowered to three, from four. Impact would be increased from two to three.

'Current management of risk' would be amended to reflect the introduction of the three-times yearly 'Policy Digest' newsletter to interested members.

P9: Other organisations asked policy questions

The formation of the Society of Biology, from the Institute of Biology and Biosciences Federation, in late 2009, posed both an opportunity and a risk to the BES; a tension which needed to be finely balanced.

Dr Rotheray highlighted the importance of constructive and proactive policy work to remaining influential in policy. An outstanding action would be added: 'Be proactive in offering information and in horizon-scanning for opportunities'. This risk depended too on the future of the Policy Assistant post. Prof. Bale urged those members of PPC on Council to make a strong case for the need to support this post in the future.

Dr Norman would amend the Risk Register to reflect the Committee's decisions (**Action: HN**).

- **Planning for the General Election**

Ceri Margerison informed members that the BES and IEEM were to write a letter together to prospective parliamentary candidates, stressing the importance of ecological science in the context of the International Year of Biodiversity. Prof. Hails suggested that the NCI would like to be involved in this and Ceri Margerison would contact Bruce Howard, NCI Science Policy Liaison to follow up (**Action: CM**).

CaSE was to write a letter to the leaders of the major political parties, asking them to outline their party's policies on science and engineering in advance of the general election. The letter would be embargoed until 9th March, the same day as a 'Science and the General Election' debate at the Houses of Parliament, organised by the Royal Society of Chemistry. The BES would sign the letter from CaSE and would be present at the debate.

Prof. Bale highlighted the need to consider the difference between conveying a general science message and a message focused around ecology. Members agreed that it would be useful for the Policy Officer to draft a briefing to accompany a letter, including:

- Why ecological science has been important in the past: what has this contributed to the UK economy? The briefing could allude to the National Ecosystem Assessment and TEEB (the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) review;
- Why ecology will continue to be important in the future;
- Ecology as an underpinning science with respect to ecological and social benefits, providing policy options for Government;
- The need to embed ecosystems thinking across all aspects of Government policy;
- The need to make use of frameworks already present, such as Environmental Impact Assessment;
- The 'green economy'. It would be useful to contact Faith Culshaw at NERC regarding this.

Although it might not be possible or appropriate for the BES to suggest policy options to Government, the BES could ask questions, challenging politicians to consider that the answers to these involve drawing on ecology.

Ceri Margerison would produce a summary document, outlining plans for the general election (**Action: CM**) and would draft the letter and briefing discussed, in partnership with Bruce Howard at NCI (**Action CM**).

- **Planning for BES – UKBRAG workshop at Annual Meeting**

The BES would build upon the success of former joint workshops with the UK BRAG by organising another session in partnership at the BES Annual Meeting in September 2010. The focus of the session would be 'The UK Marine and Coastal Access Act', covering the background to the implementation of the Act, the designation of marine protected areas and what this would mean for marine conservation and conflict resolution in the context of site designation.

Prof. Hails suggested that Dr Melanie Austen could be asked to expand her presentation to cover ecosystem services from coasts. This would be raised with Tina Yates, JNCC, co-organiser of the session (**Action: CM**).

Prof. Pullin suggested that Mike Kaiser at the University of Bangor would make a good speaker. Prof. Kaiser sat on UK BRAG as an independent marine expert. This would be suggested to Tina Yates (**Action: CM**).

The event would be advertised widely to make sure that marine ecologists were in attendance. Dr Norman suggested that the event could also be made accessible to those unable to attend through live blogging or a webcast. Ceri Margerison would discuss this with Richard English, BES Communications Officer (**Action: CM**).

- **Planning for October meeting in Peterborough**

JNCC had been approached regarding a joint workshop in the autumn, to follow a PPC meeting. The BES had put forward a proposal to focus the workshop on the implications of the October 2010 COP-10 Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in Nagoya, Japan, for conservation in the UK's Overseas Territories. JNCC had yet to confirm the topic and Ceri Margerison would follow this up (**Action: CM**).

Dr Hindmarch was very supportive of efforts to bring the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum and JNCC together; both organisations wished to achieve similar things in the UK's Overseas Territories.

- **Engaging with 'IDEA' (U.S.) on development of habitats online exhibit**

Dr Shay had contacted colleagues at universities across Canada to seek information about the IDEA project but no colleagues were aware of this. Dr Shay questioned why only the Ecological Society of America and one other organisation were supporting the project in the United States, whilst the Chair questioned whether the proposal would indeed remain cost-neutral for the BES.

After consideration the Committee decided not to lend the BES's support to the proposal from IDEA. The Policy Officer would inform the organisation (**Action: CM**).

- **Partnership with Natural England – climate change adaptation conference**

The Committee received a paper from Dr Mike Morecroft, Natural England, regarding a proposal to hold a joint workshop between the BES and Natural England in early 2011 at Charles Darwin House. The Committee was supportive in principle of the proposal but wished to see further details before committing support to the event. In particular, members requested information on:

- Whether delegates would be invited formally to attend or whether registration would be open to any interested party. If open registration, a nominal fee should be charged to maximise attendance.
- Outputs. The outputs anticipated were academic in focus and needed to be broader. Consideration was needed as to how the outputs would be used and what the conference aimed to communicate.
- Engagement with the devolved nations: Dr Batty drew members' attention to a meeting in March at the University of Bangor on the impact of climate change on Welsh habitats. It would be important for Dr Morecroft's workshop to take a UK-wide focus.

It would be helpful if Dr Morecroft tapped into the cross- government group on climate change adaptation.

A similar meeting would take place in Cambridge in June 2010; Dr Morecroft's meeting could be seen as a follow-up. The meeting should also build on the earlier BES – Defra workshop on 'Projecting the Impact of Climate Change on Biodiversity

and Ecosystem Services' (June 2008) and Dr Morecroft's attention would be drawn to the workshop report (**Action: CM**).

The Committee's view would be communicated to Dr Morecroft, who would be asked to submit a revised paper for consideration at the May 2010 meeting of PPC (**Action: PC**).

Prof. Bale suggested that it would be useful to highlight this potential joint activity with Natural England in any paper to government, and the Committee agreed.

4. PRESS

- Press Report and Forward Plan

Becky Allen, BES Press Officer, updated members on her activities.

Engaging with institutional press officers- Academics are often too busy to let press officers in their institutions know about their publications, and online publishing of journals means that institutional press officers are not kept in the loop. Journals like Science, Nature and PNAS offer an automatic alerting service to institutional press officers so that they get a few days notice of a forthcoming paper and can do their own media work. Becky had been trialling this for the BES journals over the last few months, very successfully. The process could probably be automated by Wiley-Blackwell but so far it had not been difficult to run this manually. Dr Norman commented that this was a 'win-win' situation because it was good for the institutions and benefited the BES through more press coverage for journal articles.

- British Science Festival 2010, including availability of the Press Officer's time

The BES would run an event at the British Science Festival, on 14th September, on the theme of 'Landscapes of the Future'. The Chair pointed out that the BES event would take place in the same week as the IALE UK 2010 conference on Future Landscape Ecology. Press work should be managed carefully so that journalists did not become confused, resulting in unclear press coverage.

Involvement in the British Science Festival in 2013 would be a part of the BES centenary celebrations. Maintaining a presence at the Festival in preceding years would help in ensuring that the BES could secure the support of the British Science Association to run high profile activities here.

PPC agreed that the involvement of the BES Press Officer was integral to the success of the BES event at the British Science Festival in 2009 and as such, agreed that Becky Allen should ring-fence some of her time to devote to this activity in 2010. Becky Allen would inform the BES Publications Team to ensure that Managing Editors were clear regarding her availability (**Action: BA**).

- Nominations for British Science Association Award Lectures

Becky Allen and Ceri Margerison would consider nominations outside the meeting, although both were concerned that deadlines may be tight (**Action: BA and CM**).

- Tansley Trail

The Committee was supportive of plans to develop a Tansley Trail and praised Policy and Communication Assistant Jonathan Hall's hard work in identifying suitable sites for this.

Dr Keith Kirby had been involved in re-dedicating the plaque to Sir Arthur Tansley at the head of Kingley Vale and

photographs were available of this.

Members suggested that May half term would be a better time of year to launch the trail than in the summer; many more plants would be flowering at this time.

It would be useful to develop a site in Scotland; the sites identified were focused on the South of England. Dr Norman said that Tansley had taken many photographs in Scotland. Ceri Margerison confirmed that candidate sites had been identified in Northern England and Scotland but logistics meant that it would be easier to facilitate the development of a Trail nearer to London. A site in Scotland could be developed as a follow-up to the initial project; a step-by-step guide to developing the project could be put together and used by members in Scotland wishing to take this forward.

The Chair suggested that linking with Natural England, the Wildlife Trusts and LEAF would be a good idea; LEAF in particular could help with the production of high-quality information boards. The Chair would talk to Caroline Drummond of LEAF (**Action: PC**).

- **Engagement with the BBC – Biodiversity Programming**

Ceri Margerison had met with a BBC production team at the offices of the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology in Westminster in mid-February. The team were developing a series of three programmes, entitled 'Rivers of Flowers', for filming in 2010 and broadcast in 2011. The BES could provide briefings, access to expert spokespeople and opportunities to film members in the field and this help had been offered to the BBC.

The BBC production team had approached POST because of the publication of the BES POST Fellow's POSTnote on 'Insect Pollination' in January 2010. This demonstrated the value to the BES of continuing to fund a Fellowship at POST.

5. SCIENCE POLICY

- **Science Policy Report**

The Chair thanked Jenny Oates for her hard work in putting together the Science Policy Report.

The Chair highlighted some concerns with respect to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's consultation on plans to establish a marine protected area in the British Indian Ocean Territory and would send these to the Policy Officer (**Action: PC**).

- **Policy Priorities and use of the 'Ecology into Policy' grant**

The Ecology into Policy Grant had been established six or seven years previously to provide the opportunity for researchers to undertake systematic reviews. A number of reviews had been funded and some published: Prof. Pullin suggested that these could be collated into a report.

In recent years systematic review had become more commonplace, with the result that the amount of funding offered by the EIPG had become insignificant. Prof. Pullin had recently reviewed an application under another systematic review grant scheme with costs of £140,000; a systematic review could be expected to cost, on average, £70,000.

Prof. Pullin proposed that the money available under the EIPG and money which was previously used to support the Ecological Issues series be used to support an alternative activity. The funds could be used to commission quick reviews to characterise the evidence base in a particular area; NERC and Defra, for example, were running 'pilot reviews' with a duration of two months. In comparison, a full systematic review took one to two years to deliver.

An individual or small team could be brought together to conduct a pilot review; particular researchers could be approached and invited to conduct this work. PPC could be consulted for the names of those active in particular areas. A single review could be commissioned initially, to see whether this approach could be successful.

Dr Stevens expressed concern that many of the applications currently submitted for the EIPG were from early-career researchers. These academics would not be able to participate in the 'pilot review' model as the BES would seek more established researchers with gravitas. Dr Batty also questioned whether the BES would consider approaching those who were not members of the BES.

Prof. Bale suggested that one use of the money could be to support a Policy Assistant with a remit to support the production of a pilot review, seeking out evidence and liaising with experts. The funds could be used to support a NERC Policy Fellowship. NERC and the BES would need to find matched funding to support the salary, pro rata, of a Policy Fellow, who could spend up to three months researching and writing a review. An idea was put forward that the Policy Fellow would need to be guided by a senior expert in the area covered by the review. The senior expert would act in a similar way to a PI on a Research Council grant.

Dr Stevens emphasised the importance of supporting valuable opportunities for early-career researchers to gain experience of science policy; very few organisations provided these opportunities and the BES was known to be one such organisation.

The Policy Officer would explore the development of a 'pilot reviews' programme, possibly supported by a Policy Fellow/Assistant, with the Chair (**Action: CM and PC**).

- **Development of Briefing Notes**

This item had been covered through discussions on 'policy priorities'.

- **Update from the Natural Capital Initiative**

NCI developments, outlined by Prof. Hails, were:

- Dr Bruce Howard had joined the Natural Capital Initiative as Science Policy Liaison, a full-time post as project manager to take forward the work of the NCI.
- The Steering Group had expanded, with the recruitment of Bill Watts and Chelsea Thomson, both environmental economists.
- The NCI was involved in Phase two of the National Ecosystem Assessment, helping the NEA to design stakeholder workshops to inform policy scenario development.
- Prof. Hails and others had met with Professor John Beddington, Government Chief Scientific Advisor, to discuss the Initiative. Prof. Beddington had indicated that HM Treasury officials were not yet ready to consider methods of valuing ecosystem services but had invited the NCI to present to the Chief Scientific Advisors' Committee (CSAC). The 30-minute presentation and 20-minute discussion would cover methods for valuing ecosystem services developed through the NEA and valuation more generally.
- NCI may be developing a follow-up activity to the Foresight Land-Use Futures project, on social and natural capital. This activity was being led by Prof. Jules Pretty and Tim O'Riordan.
- NCI is also developing an activity around ecosystem services and health: Prof. Beddington had felt that the NCI could play a very useful role in challenging the evidence base here.
- The NCI was currently developing its constitution: the NCI will be a Special Interest Group of the Society of Biology, with its own bank account. The constitution would be sent to Dr Norman and the Directors of CEH.
- Funding strategy: Dr Bruce Howard was actively writing applications for grants and planned to submit an application imminently to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Originally the NCI had envisaged approaching several sponsors for

support over a longer time period but the economic downturn made it difficult for organisations to commit. The focus now would therefore be on seeking sponsorship for specific events.

Prof. Hails invited members to send her any comments on the paper she had presented to the Committee (**Action: all**).

6. ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

- Update on Wilding

This item was not addressed.

7. AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

- Update from UKOTCF

There was nothing to report from the UKOTCF.

- Society of Biology

The Chief Executive of the Society of Biology would attend the next meeting of BES Council and would meet Dr Norman informally in advance of this.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 8 OCTOBER MEETING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

9. AOB

- Rob Brooker

Members of the Committee agreed to co-opt Dr Rob Brooker, Macaulay Institute, onto the Committee. Dr Brooker would be an asset to PPC, and as representative from Scotland would be extremely valuable. The Policy Officer would notify Dr Brooker (**Action: CM**).

Dr Kathryn Monk, representative to PPC from Wales, was finding it increasingly difficult to attend meetings but members agreed that her continued presence on the Committee was very helpful.

- POST Fellowship

Of the proposals for a POSTnote outlined, 'Landscapes of the Future' was most valuable. Members expressed concern that the BES POST Fellow would in 2010 not be able to work on a POSTnote which they had themselves proposed. Dr Rotheray emphasised that Fellows' proposals were always subject to approval by the POST Board. All agreed that it would be important to communicate to applicants that they would not be working on their own proposal this year.

- EFRA Questions

The EFRA Select Committee was to question Prof. Bob Watson, Defra's Chief Scientific Advisor, at an evidence session on 17th March. Members agreed to send the Policy Officer any questions which they wished the BES to raise in relation to Defra's new 'Evidence and Investment' strategy (**Action: all**).

Next meeting of PPC: 29 April 2010, Charles Darwin House, Grays Inn Road, London

Number	Action	Responsible
1	Feed back to unsuccessful applicant for 2009 EIPG	PC
2	Provide a contact at DFID regarding matched funding for applicants from Nepal to the PEG	DO
3	Circulate position statement protocol to PPC	CM
4	Contact BES Grants Officer regarding BES logo use on Sander Den Haring's project materials	CM/ Dominic Burton
5	Check if Bootstrap Company is a registered charity	CM/ Dominic Burton
6	Ask the Grants Officer to robustly screen PEG applications at an early stage in 2011	CM/ Dominic Burton
7	Submit any outstanding expenses claims before the end of March	All
8	Amend the Risk Register to reflect Committee's comments	HN
9	Contact Bruce Howard regarding NCI involvement in letter to prospective parliamentary candidates	CM
10	Produce a summary document outlining plans for the General Election	CM
11	Draft letter to prospective parliamentary candidates	CM
12	Discuss expansion of Mel Austen's session, to cover coastal ecosystem services, with Tina Yates, UK BRAG	CM
13	Suggest Prof. Michael Kaiser to Tina Yates as a speaker at UK BRAG session	CM
14	Discuss web-casting or live blogging of the UK BRAG session with Richard English, BES Communications Officer	CM
15	Follow up with JNCC regarding topic for autumn workshop	CM
16	Inform IDEA that the BES would not support its proposal	CM
17	Alert Dr Morecroft to the report of the 2008 BES – Defra workshop on 'Projecting the Impacts of Climate Change'	CM
18	Ask Dr Morecroft to submit a revised paper for April 2009 PPC meeting	PC
19	Inform BES Publications Team of available time to devote to Journals press work	BA
20	Consider nominations for the BSA Award Lectures	CM/ BA
21	Talk to Caroline Drummond of LEAF regarding Tansley Trail information boards.	PC
22	Send any concerns over the FCO consultation on plans to implement a Marine Protected Area in the Chagos Archipelago to Policy Officer	PC
23	Explore the development of a 'pilot reviews' programme, possibly supported by a Policy Fellow/ Assistant.	CM/ PC
24	Send any comments NCI paper to Prof. Hails	All
25	Notify Dr Brooker of his appointment to PPC	CM
26	Send any questions BES should raise on Defra's 'Evidence and Investment Strategy' to Policy Officer as soon as possible	All