



# SCOTTISH POLICY GROUP

BRITISH ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Scottish Natural Heritage  
Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba  
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*A summary report from the Pie and a Pint event, jointly hosted by BES SPG and SNH on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018 at the Phoenix Ale House, Inverness.*

## “What does biodiversity success in 2020 look like?”

The event was open to all BES-SPG members and those interested in biodiversity policy. About 25 people attended the event from a wide range of organisations.

The event was opened with five-minute flash talks from the following who were expressing their own views on what biodiversity success looks like:

- Paul Walton - Head of Habitats and Species, RSPB Scotland
- David O’Brien - Knowledge and Information Manager, SNH
- Peter Mayhew - Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience, Cairngorms National Park
- Siobhan Macdonald - Senior Agricultural Consultant, Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC)
- Jonathan Willet - Former Highland Council Biodiversity Officer

Following the presentations, the attendees split into four groups to respond to the following questions:

- What is working well with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to deliver the 2020 targets?
- What hasn’t worked well in Scottish Biodiversity Strategy?
- Where should we go after 2020? – With respect to strategy
- Where should we go after 2020? – With respect to biodiversity

Each group spent 15 minutes discussing a question before moving onto the next so that by the end of the session each group of attendees had responded to every question. Each question was located at a different table with a dedicated facilitator who collated all the responses to their question.

The main points are summarised below, and a record of the notes taken during the breakout groups is given in Appendix A.

Key points from speakers:

Paul Walton (RSPB)

- Arbitrary dates such as 2020 are far less important than the context on where we stand in geological time at the dawn of the Anthropocene. It raises the key question for humans of “what should our relationship with nature be in the future”.
- With a few spectacular exceptions (e.g. Save the Whale) previous conservation measures have failed.

- Ethics need to be re-introduced into the discussion on biodiversity.

David O'Brien (SNH)

- There is a focus on 2020 largely because of the Convention on Biological Diversity held in Aichi Prefecture, Japan. Each signatory state agreed to report on the 20 Aichi Targets. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018, the International Day for Biodiversity, Scotland will be the first nation in the world to report on the full suite of 20 Aichi Targets<sup>1</sup>.
- Progress towards the Aichi targets has been mixed, with some success stories but other problems remaining unsolved.
- Key successes towards the Aichi Targets in Scotland include:
  - Scotland having had an impact internationally with a positive effect on other nations. This spans topics such as decarbonising energy production, acting on marine plastics, reducing exports of negative biodiversity impacts (e.g. using imported feedstuffs for farming and aquaculture), as well as obvious trans-border impacts such as climate change.
  - Closer working with land managers to deliver the targets (e.g. peatlands).
  - Designating Marine Protected Areas; 18% of Scotland's seas have been brought under site protection.
  - Lots of research delivered by citizen scientists. This has led to a more informed and engaged population (e.g. OPAL air laboratories reaching over 128, 000 beneficiaries with 25, 000 being from disadvantaged background).
- Potential challenges relating to the Aichi Targets in Scotland:
  - Protected sites need to be part of networks across the countryside and therefore measured in a different way in future.
  - Choices need to be made in the light of government spend on the environment decreasing.
  - Prevention of extinction – mixed picture with some species doing well and some doing poorly.
  - How invasive species are dealt with - rapid response (or not).
  - Issues around interacting with businesses. There can be deep financial impact on businesses but there has been limited success at enlisting businesses support.
  - Aquaculture and its impacts.
  - Links to uplands at its management (e.g. grouse, deer and browsing).
- One of the challenges for reporting is that the framework has to work in all countries from Nepal to Norway. These countries have very different biodiversity and very different reporting needs. Going forward any future reporting structure must be able to accommodate these diverse needs.
- Targets are frequently counterproductive as a review of the use of targets in the National Health Service makes plain. A target that is appropriate in one place may not be appropriate in another, clean river targets will be easier for Scotland to meet than China. Equally, if a country is missing a target, there may be a temptation to fudge the figures to get it up to a perhaps arbitrary level set by diplomats in a late-night meeting, or worse still, just give up in the face of a target that is unrealistic.
- Rather than targets, we need to have measures. Measures are just tools to help us achieve things. They help us know if we're going in the right direction, can tell us if what we're doing is helping biodiversity, making no difference or even making things worse.
- Urban nature – the central belt may look like a concrete wall across the nation but, we have an opportunity to replace barriers with bridges. This is especially important in the face of climate change and it also connects people and nature. We talk about nature deficit disorder, we see mental health issues, increasing obesity, and we know that time spent immersed in nature is the most cost-effective cure. If we help biodiversity, we help ourselves. And, we help the most disadvantaged groups in society.
- For me, biodiversity success will be when we live in places where everyone has access to diverse wildlife, where human pressures on biodiversity are reducing and where people really value nature.

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<sup>1</sup> Scotland Progress towards Aichi Targets - <https://www.snhpresscentre.com/news/embargoed-until-00-01hrs-on-tuesday-22nd-may-scotland-leads-the-way-in-international-nature-targets>

## Pete Mayhew (CNP)

### Successes:

Ecosystem protection – landscape scale work is developing through projects such as Cairngorms Connect; East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership (six grouse estates); River Catchment Management Plans (e.g. natural flood protection); Deer Management Group plans.

- Natural Capital – is building in several areas e.g. Cairngorms Connect; significant increases in woodland area throughout the Park; peatland restoration through Peatland Action grants.
- Health, well-being and education – There has been successful large scale public engagement with Active Cairngorms; Cairngorms Nature Big Weekend (5000 participants in four years); Wee Walks Week.
- Protected places and action for wildlife – Cairngorms Nature Action Plan; Heritage Lottery Fund capercaillie project; rare plants and invertebrates projects.

### Challenges:

- Sustainable hunting – we need to try and define and give examples of what this looks like. The East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership (ECMP) project is attempting to work on several themes to help this process e.g. wader conservation, mountain hare management, muirburn plans, woodland opportunity mapping, raptor conservation.
- Connecting local communities to the ‘re-wilding’ agenda is a challenge but one that is being worked on e.g. through Cairngorms Connect.

## Siobhan Macdonald, (SRUC)

- In terms of implementing agri-environment measures, particularly those focussed on biodiversity/climate amelioration, the current (Agri-Environment Climate Scheme “AECS”) and recent schemes have been problematic due to three aspects: the application process, the support available and the returns for small units.
- Firstly, the application process:
  - The process is tortuous and time-consuming
  - The rules are complex (The Soil Association events to help land managers with the Scheme are aptly called ‘AECS & Pains’)
  - There is therefore a need to engage help, usually from a consultant (£1-3K) – a big risk
  - The funds available are generally inadequate for the number of projects; and
  - Sometimes entry into a scheme is down to good fortune of location or size of unit, not ability for protection or improvement of habitats or species
- Secondly, support:
  - for small units, crofters and farmers don’t just need financial help to carry out measures; they need machinery, access to capital, conservation advice to help them make the best choice in managing habitats.
- Thirdly, income forgone payments:
  - For small units and crofts, due to scale, the compensation is insufficient. For example, for a crofter with no tractor, discs, drill or fertiliser spreader, to employ a contractor to sow out an area of wild bird seed, will cost multiple times the payment from an agri-env scheme. Likewise, for introducing native cattle, the costs of infrastructure required to keep cattle, and the cost of feed and vet as well as the capital cost of purchasing cows, is far, far in excess of the payment.
- Biodiversity success through agri-environment schemes could and should be focussed on outcomes and not the application process. Many land managers are knowledgeable and capable of delivering measures that improve biodiversity. Why do we not make use of or trust in that knowledge? Of course, some have different priorities for their business, but if our ambition is to improve biodiversity, then make it easy to do so. Provision of low-cost advice, machinery-lending groups, simple application forms and encouragement of monitoring for success would be simple changes.

Jonathan Willet, (Former Biodiversity Officer at Highland Council)

- Issues facing the delivery of the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy (SBS):
  - Things need to get catastrophic before people will change behaviour
  - SBS is not funded but relies on voluntary activity so there is very limited scope for learning or capitalising on good practice
  - Biodiversity targets are not met, agri-environment is public funding for habitat loss;
  - The SBS is not working but it could.

## Summary of breakout groups

Question 1: “What is working well with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to deliver the 2020 targets?”

- A range of projects have delivered clear biodiversity benefits because of the SBS or have benefited from it. These include peatland restoration, some targeted agri-environmental schemes, EU-collaboration projects (e.g. Pearls in Peril), infrastructure projects incorporating more effective mitigation, single species re-introductions of charismatic species and various citizen science initiatives.
- Those projects with the most success tend to be those with a high input and buy in from the local community.
- The SBS has put a focus on Scotland’s habitats and species. This coupled with the successful projects mentioned above (and listed in Appendix A) has provided a sense of achievement and positivity surrounding biodiversity in Scotland which is an excellent platform from which to build further gains.
- The fact that the SBS document exists is a positive in and of itself. It is a good document with a route-map approach listing priority habitats and species and actions to be taken to deliver the desired biodiversity goals. It has also highlighted weaknesses with certain elements which should be delivering positive biodiversity outcomes, in particular protected areas and ecosystem services.

Question 2 “What hasn’t worked well in Scottish Biodiversity Strategy?”

- Many of the failings of the SBS appear to stem from poor communication. This ranges from how to transmit such a high-level document to the scale at which most projects are delivered, to failure of NGOs and public organisations to reach a consensus, or more specifically where projects have shown a lack sensitivity to local conditions.
- SBS has fallen down in some areas due to its very high-level nature and a lack of top down support. It was considered that there had been a lack of commitment from the Scottish Government to support the project with planning enforcement or agricultural compliance measures.
- Unlike locally driven projects there was a lack of coordination with respect to wider land use and conservation thinking was missing from strategic planning. Plans to deliver SBS lacked focus and, communication between those with an academic understanding of the issues and those delivering the SBS on the ground was poor.

Question 3 “Where should we go after 2020? – With respect to strategy”

- Any new strategy should be inclusive and capture the needs of all stakeholders. It needs to be underpinned by an education strategy which helps as many people as possible (including those from urban back grounds) identify as having a stake in Scottish biodiversity. This will help increase political will to drive biodiversity improvement, it was noted that no one from the Scottish Government attended the RSE biodiversity conference.
- Any new strategy needs to be underpinned by robust independent assessments and monitoring of past and current land management practices – e.g. how effective are protected areas at achieving their goals?
- A key tenant of the strategy should be to address habitat fragmentation. This should be addressed through increasing the size of and connectivity between protected areas but also of habitats in urban areas to enhance the urban habitat networks. Biodiversity off-setting should be an option, but it should be a last resort.

- The strategy needs to be entwined with planning legislation so that the law enforces high minimum standards but there are also incentives to encourage better performance. Brexit offers an opportunity to sift legislation keeping those which deliver on biodiversity such as the Water Framework Directive.

#### Question 4 “Where should we go after 2020? – With respect to biodiversity”

There were three themes within this topic area, planning, engagement and delivery.

- It was thought that planning for biodiversity should be undertaken at an international scale and make use of the vast array of data now available to incorporate global trends in climate and the spread of invasive species. The biodiversity goals coming out of these plans should have clear targets and be equivalent and linked to other political metrics such as health or housing targets. This will increase the pressure on government to address them.
- Public engagement was identified as key to success and efforts should be sought to bring biodiversity to the fore front of a range of spheres including education and politics. There was also discussion about how biodiversity should be framed, linking it directly to sustainability at a global scale and moving away from discussions of natural capital and economics.
- Programmes to deliver biodiversity goals should focus on agricultural practices and use education to drive producer practices through informed consumer decision making. These delivery mechanisms need to be simplified and flexible enough to work at a range of scales and be monitored using a suite of accessible and proven monitoring methodologies. Where re-wilding is carried out this needs to be programmed to require only very light touch management.

## Appendix A – Notes from the four breakout groups

### Question 1: “What is working well with the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy to deliver the 2020 targets?”

- There has been success with peatland restoration where Techniques have been perfected using funding from windfarms.
- There has also been success with some Agri-environmental schemes where there has been collaboration such as with corncrakes and chequered skipper
- There has been success where people have had ‘pet projects’ which they drive themselves. Species action framework so lead partner develops an action plan and provides funding
- UK funded projects, these seem to have more flexibility and fewer rules
- There have been positive impacts on water quality through good advice and financial incentives coupled with enforcement of rules e.g. Loch Leven catchment
- Infrastructure projects such as the A9 where the SBS has led to appropriate mitigation and protection of native species
- ‘Pearls in Peril’ project, an EU Life project run with SNH has provided multiple benefits, including increases in water quality and benefits for salmon as well as for FWPM.
- The living landscapes initiatives from the Scottish Wildlife Trusts has involved communities and increased engagement - community buy in is essential for it to be sustainable.
- Futurescapes (RSPB)
- Green Incentives – waterways and community restoration
- Central Scotland green network has helped to reduce fragmentation and has been able to hit both environmental and economic buttons.
- Forestry and re-wilding – there are slowly patches being created which need connecting but there is good progress being made
- Projects work well with a key individual driving them
- Urban green space – woodland in and around towns
- Adaptive management
- Small, local projects, local people with a biodiversity officer
- Rangers – good link across areas
- Joint ownership – easier on local
- Community buyouts – people involved and assent
- Scale and connectivity – It allows landowners to connect and work together and gives the potential to access big funding streams (Cairngorms connect?)
- Use of community rights
- EIGG community buyout
- John Muir award
- Eco-schools
- Citizen science – BTO Atlas, bumblebee and butterfly monitoring
- Technology – apps
- Certain species have done well due to their high profile which has raised public awareness e.g. White-tailed eagles, pine martens, there is a question of transparency of the work undertaken with/ for these species. The transparency of the work carried out with these species has had both good and bad results
- Trust between stakeholders
- All sides talking
- SBS existence is a good thing
- Protected areas
- SBS has highlighted weaknesses and problems with protected areas and ecosystem services
- And provided a red flag for deficiencies
- Pollinator strategy – a good indicator across species
- Focus on Scottish habitats and species of international importance

- There is a sense of achievement in Scotland - positive about biodiversity in Scotland and this is a good starting point to build from
- Finally included actual actions
- The route map approach is positive as it has a list of priorities, species and habitats
- Where money is invested it provides good value for money
- Gets into the curriculum for excellence – education and as a result is known to the next generation
- SBS is a good document even if the actions aren't implemented

#### Question 2 “What hasn't worked well in Scottish Biodiversity Strategy?”

- Issues with communication- SBS is very high level with limited ground level relevance
- There has been a lack of communication between those who have the academic understanding and those who are delivering the strategy.
- There has been a lack of Scottish Government Commitment to delivery and a lack of appropriate resources e.g. planning, enforcement, agricultural compliance
- The transition from the SBS to tactics used for delivery has had a lack of focus
- There has been a failure to sustain local action
- There has been a failure to integrate conservation thinking into wider land use
- There has been a lack of 'biodiversity' in 'sustainability'
- No integration of environmental management with conservation
- No government level vision for land use
- Agri-environment surrounded by bureaucracy and dis-incentives, lacks an output focus
- Lack of local sensitivity
- Lack of consensus between NGO and public bodies which delays progress

#### Question 3 “Where should we go after 2020? – With respect to strategy”

- Targets unhelpful in NHS
- Some things easier to measure e.g. water quality, air quality
- Beyond compliance
- One planet prosperity
- Law sets minimum standards, incentives encourage better performance
- Need to resolve some upland management issues e.g. grouse
- Changing attitudes through education and recognising good estates and practitioners – talk to each other
- Protected areas – bigger, more connected, better enforced
- Priorities – may vary by area and need to include connection
- Words – power of language
- Strategy needs a delivery plan that includes resources
- Needs to be relevant to landowners, citizen scientists
- True carbon loss needs to be captured too
- Link strategy and tactics – Sun Tzu
- Build trust – not just conservationists
- Look for win-wins
- Scotland's Wild Deer A National Approach – a good role model – action focused – wide range of active stakeholders
- Political will – No one from SG at RSE Biodiversity conference, loads at Nat Capital forum
- Need to keep focus on biodiversity and integrating conservation across land and sea sectors
- Need the science to underpin post 2020 Biodiversity
- Independent, objective assessments e.g. how effective are protected areas
- NB lots of aquaculture research funded by Norwegian fish farm companies
- Complex post Brexit think about agricultural subsidy
- Keep the good legislation e.g. on WFD

- education and awareness for children – informed choices
- Specific targets? Right targets (or should it be right measures)
- We need local involvement to get local buy-in and participation - let them decide what is reasonable
- Don't forget biodiversity - people important but it is a biodiversity strategy
- Habitat networks especially ponds
- Funding, including biodiversity education
- Has to be relevant to 'person on street' e.g. urban people and education of what they can see in urban area
- Needs to include urban habitats e.g. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- Influence planning - integrate biodiversity into planning policy
- Offsetting – last resort – need to link existing protected area
- Wildlife in towns and habitat networks

#### Question 4 “Where should we go after 2020? – With respect to biodiversity”

- Public engagement is key – biodiversity and politics education
- Resist the reframing of biodiversity as natural capital
- Frame sustainability in terms of biodiversity not economics
- Focus on focus on agricultural practices and consumer decisions
- Simplify monitoring: come up with a list of proven actions, stop repeating known studies
- Simplify the paperwork around biodiversity projects: make them more locally targeted
- Make a live habitat map – data there 2 it is needed?
- We need to rethink biodiversity scales – either very local or national. It needs to be more flexible/ tailored
- Communication needs to target different audiences in different ways, public education key
- Need to plan for low management re-wilding, too hands on right now
- Invasive species scanning, major future threat to domestic biodiversity
- New strategy (2030?) with clear targets and linked to implementation
- Link biodiversity aims into other strategies to make the government hit them (e.g. housing, health)
- Frame biodiversity internationally, protect globally rare not locally rare. Recognise global biodiversity impact of domestic decisions. Factor in things like climate shifts (why protect something that is doomed?)
- Big data planning opportunities