

**IUCN UK Committee
AGM &
Members Meeting**

17th May 2006

**Stranmillis University College
Stranmillis Road
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT9 5DY**

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Preface

The IUCN UK National Committee Annual General Meeting and a Member's Meeting were held on May 17th 2006 at Stranmillis University College, Stranmillis Road, Belfast BT9 5DY.

The purpose of the AGM was to acquaint the UK Membership with the current status of the UK Committee. Following the AGM, the Member's meeting addressed the topic of climate change, its possible effects and consequences, and how we might adapt to it, with a focus upon Ireland. The AGM and Members' meeting were chaired by Andy Brown, who took over as Chair from this meeting.

This report was prepared by John Henson Webb from notes taken by Dr Vin Fleming and John Henson Webb.

IUCN UK National Committee Annual General Meeting

Chair's welcome

Andy Brown (English Nature) Chair of the IUCN UK Committee, welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially colleagues from the Irish Republic, and to the Conference Hall venue at Stranmillis University College.

Andy Brown drew the attention of the meeting to the coincidental but praiseworthy publication of an eight page colour supplement on Ireland's natural heritage in the day's *Irish Independent*, which covered diverse issues such as 'green' road building, marine biodiversity and invasive species – a highly recommended read.

Chair's annual review

The Chair noted that 2005 had been a frenetic year, with the April and December meetings looking at how to carry forward Countdown 2010. Achieving the 2010 target of reducing the rate of biodiversity loss is an important UK Government commitment, which was made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, in 2002, and reinforced at the European Environment Ministers meeting.

The UK Committee's contribution to the pan-European objectives for the initiative over the past year had been as follows.

- Encouraging implementation of all existing biodiversity commitments – a working group of the UK Committee is putting together a list of UK commitments, useful for reporting progress against C2010 targets.
- Demonstrating progress toward overall biodiversity targets – considered at a previous UK Committee Members' meeting. The above action will contribute to this but the UK Committee are not directly involved in the science behind the target. Though difficult to measure and requiring great effort, an holistic view is important.
- Gain maximum public attention for challenge of the 2010 target-. The UK Committee are looking at holding a parliamentary seminar to raise the profile of C2010 and possibly a leaflet detailing C2010 commitments and current progress.

The 'Speaking a Common Language' report on IUCN Protected Area categorisation, produced by Adrian Philips and the WCPA, is being taken forward by an IUCN task force. Nigel Dudley (who leads the task force) wants the UK Committee to look at the application of the categories within the UK and, as Chair of the UK Committee, Andy Brown felt that it would be valuable for the UK Committee to contribute to the process, especially given that the previous exercise had been inadequate. He had secured the support of the country agencies for this process through their Chief Executives. The next step is for Secretariat to form a working group of relevant stakeholders to establish the best means of pursuing this.

After the last World Conservation Congress, dissatisfaction was voiced over the Resolutions process. The UK Government approached the UK Committee for formal advice on measures to improve the situation. An interim view by the Executive Committee has now gone to Defra, but the UK Committee as a whole needs to consider how the process can be improved.

The first Regional and National Chairs meeting was held in The Hague in February, looking at ways of improving the governance of the IUCN, at which President Valli Moosa made a number of commitments. Alistair Gammell (the Regional Councillor for Western Europe) is on the Governance Task Force and Andy Brown has been asked to sit on the five-person Presidential Advisory Group, to provide recommendations on how to better utilise both National and Regional Committees.

The UK Committee pursues one major project during a year. The current project is "Who Pays for Biodiversity and Who Benefits?" which aims to determine how UK spend supports biodiversity conservation domestically and internationally. Looking at 'who pays' first, and whilst a simple question, it is difficult to get a handle on the issue. This is a much more difficult issue to resolve than it might at first sight appear, especially with respect to the private sector. The project is being led by Paul Morling (RSPB) and is pulling together separate strands, looking at contributions from both government, NGO and the private sector, the latter being dealt with by the JNCC; NGOs are gathering data from their perspective. It is hoped to have an interim report available in early summer 2006 and then discuss the methodology, reliability of data and where to go next.

In addition, the Chair noted the following.

- The newly re-designed IUCN-UK Committee website will be made available shortly.
- The Secretariat contract with JNCC has been renewed to March 2009.
- Achim Steiner has resigned as Director-General and is going to become Head of UNEP. Andy Brown wrote a letter of congratulations on behalf of UK Committee. IUCN are now in the process of recruiting a new Director General.
- ExCo met four times during the year, twice in conjunction with Members' meetings and twice by teleconference.

Roger Crofts was then invited to speak regarding the Sibthorp Trust. Roger provided a brief background on the Trust and noted that it wished to reconnect with the UK Committee, with Andy Brown having been invited to become a Trustee. Other Trustees include Camila Toulmin (IIED), Ed Maltby, Tricia Henson (EA) and Dave Roberts (Rio Tinto). The Trust plans to develop a programme on biodiversity and health, looking at provoking debate in this area. They are planning a one day meeting in Liverpool for 2006, to be followed by a longer workshop in 2007. The Trust is well funded and would welcome ideas for other areas to pursue, such as progress in the UK on the ecosystem approach. Roger also noted that the new European Programme for Protected Areas (2005-08) was highlighted in the latest ROfE newsletter.

Andy Brown then noted that he wanted to strengthen the UK Committee's links with IUCN Commissions who, with their global expertise, are forward thinking and often at the cutting edge of developments in conservation. It is intended to connect with Commission members in the UK and promote their activities to the wider UK Membership.

Report of the 2005 AGM & matters arising

With no matters arising, the report of the 2005 AGM was adopted and is published on the IUCN-UK website.

The Chair raised three issues for comment from the assembled Members:

- Countdown 2010: Discussion centred on a possible role of the UK Committee in promoting C2010, whether through the proposed parliamentary seminar or by encouraging other organisations in their efforts and providing guidance if appropriate. It was not considered feasible for the UK Committee to attempt to carry all the issues, but ExCo will consider the various options that were suggested.
- Protected Areas: It was considered that the UK Committee could have a significant role in this issue, perhaps with WCPA UK members acting as an independent verification of the steps the UK Committee are taking toward re-categorisation of the UK's protected areas under the IUCN system. This would help 'benchmark' protected areas in the UK against those in other countries and also assist in testing the categorisation system and further the aims of the "Speaking a Common Language" project. It was noted that this

process needed to have conservation value, should not be simply a bureaucratic exercise but would act as a benchmark, and may help to change perceptions of protected areas.

- Resolutions Process: A new category of “expressions of opinion” was proposed along with sponsorship of resolutions by Regional Councils. The need for the resolutions to express IUCN policies was noted. However, concerns were raised that too drastic a change to the process may prevent developing countries with limited capacity from engaging fully in a governance issue that helps the IUCN develop policy. The Governance Task Force are currently addressing the issue, so Andy suggested that the UK Committee reflect on this and refine its thinking. It would, however, be the UK Government’s final decision on what suggestions went to the IUCN Council.

Report from the Regional Councillor: Alistair Gammell

Alistair reported on preparations for the next WCC, to be held in 3-18 October 2008. The two candidate countries were Ethiopia and Spain, with the latter as favourite. Concerns have been expressed over staging Congress in developing countries as the cost of hosting an event for five thousand people was considered prohibitive.

IUCN have set up a panel of ‘renowned thinkers’ to discuss a new paradigm – “how will the world turn out?” – to stimulate discussion on what is required regarding climate change, sustainable development etc. to steer governments away from short-term considerations. However, Alistair argued that both the global IUCN Membership and external organisations needed to be actively involved in such a process.

Election of Executive Committee for 2006

The Secretariat noted that nominations had been received for all of the five positions of elected members. Eric Blencowe (Defra) had been nominated as the representative of the UK Government and Joanna Robertson (Countryside Council for Wales) was succeeding Marion Hughes (Scottish Natural Heritage) as the representative of the statutory conservation agencies. Both were elected unopposed.

With respect to the remaining three places, Sue Christie (Northern Ireland Link), Mark Huxham (Scottish Environment Link), Martin Spray (Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust) had been nominated.

With no other nominations the three were duly elected.

The Executive Committee has also co-opted Derek Moore and Mike Pienkowski (UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum).

The Chair welcomed the new elected and co-opted representatives to the Executive Committee and thanked Marion Hughes (SNH) for all her efforts on behalf of the UK Committee over the past years. Marion Hughes replied by saying that it had been a wonderful opportunity, that she had enjoyed ‘almost all’ of her time with ExCo and recommended the experience to all.

Financial report from Treasurer

The finances were noted as being in good order with a larger than anticipated carry-over. This was due to anticipated expenditure on the Who Pays? project not occurring in 2005 and the funds allocated accordingly remained unspent. The Committee will, however, be following-up on several possible projects this year.

With no further questions, the Chair thanked the participants and closed the AGM.

Members Meeting

“Conservation adaptation to climate change”

The Powerpoint© presentations provided at the meeting have been reproduced as PDF files on the UK Committee website: www.iucn-uk.org.

The Chairman, Andy Brown, opened the Members' meeting by noting that climate change was a topical issue and asked whether we know what we should be doing to alleviate the effects? What changes are necessary to environmental policy? What are the management issues? What changes will it make to the philosophy of conservation? The aim of the meeting was to explore some of these issues and consider how in conservation we might adapt to climate change.

“Climate Change – setting the scene for biodiversity change”

John Sweeney, University of Ireland

John presented a comprehensive overview on the evidence for, and implications of, climate change as it has affected Ireland. Noting that life is risky and that risks are managed by assuming a normal distribution of events and then one can estimate the probability of departure from the norm of, say, flood events. However, climate change means the rules are changing and extreme weather events appear to be occurring with ever greater frequency. The cause of climate change is clear and Ireland is in the top 5 countries in the world for *per capita* emissions of greenhouse gases. Observed changes in Ireland, even with the buffering effect of the Atlantic, have included a halving of frost frequency in SW Ireland and a doubling of hot days and halving of cold days in Dublin. Accurate climate modelling is required but standard global climate modelling is inherently inaccurate when applied at a smaller scale. For policy and planning purposes 'downscaling' is required and statistical downscaling, establishing relationships between meso-scale data and local data, was the preferred option.

Empirical statistical downscaling was used to determine possible scenarios for Ireland in the year 2055. Among other outcomes, the models suggested an increase in winter rainfall by 11% but summer rainfall to decrease by 20-30%, resulting in summer reductions in river flow and stress on water resource management. The mild winters experienced by SW Ireland would spread to much of the rest of Ireland. There are likely to be numerous impacts on agriculture including changes to the viability of both livestock and crops in effected regions. Rising sea levels may adversely affect coastal habitats and geological features, with an increasing risk of natural disasters such as storm surges. There is also statistical evidence for effects on the distribution and behaviour of plant and animal species. John concluded by noting that the EU's target of warming not to exceed 2°C above pre-industrial levels was critical – beyond that threshold changes become more extreme.

Discussion:

It was noted that though an increase in winter rainfall might be advantageous in some respects, such as an earlier commencement of growth and an extended growing season, but that the magnitude of reductions in summer rainfall would introduce stress through periods of drought. It was also observed that the influx of vagrant species is likely to lead to eventual colonisation and, therefore, attitudes toward such species need to be rethought.

“Adaptive principles for the conservation of UK biodiversity in response to climate change”

John Hopkins, English Nature

John provided a presentation on how current management practices could be adapted to help reduce the adverse impact of climate change on habitat and species conservation. It is known that the biodiversity 'fingerprint' of climate change includes observable effects on species phenology, distribution and abundance and this picture is better for the UK than for most other parts of the globe. However, there remain numerous sources of uncertainty when possible

effects are discussed, such as the inaccuracies inherent in climate modelling and changes in emissions as well as future land and water usage. A further source of uncertainty is just how affected species will respond to changing pressures.

The proposed concept of adaptive management would build learning into the process through a review of management and responses to changes. Such an approach might look to transform nature reserve wardens into strategic biodiversity managers, reacting to changes by making biodiversity 'investment decisions' on a broader scale rather than working toward proscribed targets with a local focus. The guidelines were developed as a means to aid thinking on how we might respond to climate change.

The suggested "Adaptive Guidelines" are:

1. Conserve the habitat and species baseline:
 - 1a. Conserve Protected Areas and other Good Quality Wildlife Habitat.
 - 1b. Conserve range and ecological variability of habitats and species.
2. Reduce sources of harm not linked to climate.
3. Develop ecologically resilient landscapes:
 - 3a. Conserve and enhance patch variation within the landscape.
 - 3b. Make space for the natural development of rivers and coasts.
4. Establish ecological networks.
5. Make sound decisions based on analysis:
 - 5a. Thoroughly analyse causes of change.
 - 5b. Use adaptive conservation targets and priorities.

For each guideline, John outlined examples how each might be applied. For example, if species are conserved in different environments then it increases their chance of long-term survival; using topography and altitude to maintain greater patch variation, and so greater ecological resilience, in landscapes; and in reducing risks to species other than from climate change (using farmland birds as an example) as a means of buffering the impact of climate change impacts. Finally, John left the meeting to consider whether conservation was in 'administrative entropic decay'?

Discussion:

The use of adaptive guidelines can provide an opportunity to react to changes in climate. However, the complexity of interactions between different environmental factors needs to be understood, perhaps taking some note of past climate change.

The current plethora of conservation designations is complex and it was suggested that a simpler, over-arching framework may prove more useful, taking a 'whole landscape' approach rather than concentrating on individual protected areas. Good quality habitat, with the properties to be a 'recipient-site' as biodiversity ebbs and flows around the landscape, should be protected, but with the understanding that it itself is likely to undergo change and so management should remain flexible. Such an involved concept is potentially difficult to articulate to all the necessary stakeholders, such as government, the public and land owners.

The conservation system employed by the Dutch was mentioned, with the concept of a joined-up approach across the whole of the country. With any necessary caution and adaptation this could be applied to the UK, promoting a 'UK vision' to be carried through from policy level down to management efforts on the ground.

"The BioChange Project – Biodiversity and Environmental Change: an Integrated Study Encompassing a Range of Scales, Taxa and Habitats"

Bruce Osborne, BioChange

Bruce provided a presentation on BioChange, the first integrative, multi-disciplinary research project to support national and local biodiversity policy in Ireland. The aim is to develop an integrated cluster of research activities that address issues surrounding Irish biodiversity and provide a platform for capacity building within biodiversity research. Focus will be on habitat

fragmentation and loss, impacts on non-native species, climate change, pollution and resource management.

BioChanges' major works include habitat fragmentation and the role of remnant wetlands and ponds; non-native and invasive species, biodiversity and climate change; natural resource exploitation and global climate change. There are also a number of cross-cutting themes and projects, such as biodiversity politics-policy, planning and public understanding; an expandable web-based organism inventory.

Noting the potential interaction of climate change with invasive species, Bruce then provide details of experimental field work relating to three invasive species, *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, *Gunnera tinctoria* and *Fallopia japonica*. He noted their impacts upon existing seedbanks and the experimental approach being taken to assess how changing environmental parameters may affect the species. Noting the link of the spread of *Gunnera tinctoria* with increased winter rainfall, Bruce outlined how climate change may render control measures ineffective.

Discussion:

The issue of the role of water in spreading these riparian invasives, the history of their spread and the value of the experimental approach was raised. BioChange are confident in the experimental approach they have adopted, the use of micro-greenhouses in the field, and that the majority of factors have been accounted for, including genetic analyses of populations and vectors for seed dispersal.

“The Emerald Isle in the global greenhouse: what chance for our wildlife?”

James Robinson, RSPB

James looked at the implications for Northern Ireland's wildlife of likely changes in climate. Noting that Northern Ireland is a small place but one with big problems and where the environment is low on the political agenda, he noted that 75% of the area's emissions came from the burning of oil, coal and gas with the transport and agriculture sectors accounting for 27 and 22% respectively of all emissions. Predicted changes to Northern Ireland's climate included an increase in annual average temperatures, wetter summers but drier winters, a significant decrease in snowfall and shifts over time in summer temperatures and rainfall as follows:

- 2020s: +0.5-1.0 Degrees Centigrade/ -20% rain
- 2050s: +1.0-2.5 Degrees Centigrade/ -30% rain
- 2080s: +1.5-3.5 Degrees Centigrade/ -50% rain

These changes may have a variety of implications for land use such as more pesticides being required to combat increased risks from pests and diseases, western farmland becoming too wet to farm, more frequent winter flooding and the (re)wetting of peat bogs. The implications for wildlife may include shifts in migration patterns (such as fewer birds needing to travel to western Britain to over-winter if the climate is milder further east), breeding waders being likely to suffer from drier summers and asynchronous shifts in the phenology of hatching of chicks and the emergence of their main insect food, and northern shifts in food for seabirds. Yet some changes may also mean the colonisation of species such as little or, even, cattle egrets. James concluded by suggesting a range of measures to enable mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. These included effective targets for reducing green house gas emissions, a renewable power plan for Northern Ireland with a strategic spatial framework for renewables development on land and at sea, the monitoring of changes in wildlife distribution and abundance and strategies for nature conservation that took account of future changes likely to arise from climate change.

Discussion:

It was noted that Defra had recently commissioned a report on the impacts of climate change on migratory species (hardcopies available direct from Defra) and that Jim Knight had announced further research on this subject in 2006.

The question was posed that, as a species' distribution changes in response to changing climate, do we know enough to determine which may decline to extinction? It was seen that there was a need to develop an international view so as to invest effort conserving species which are species

to Northern Ireland (e.g. filmy ferns) rather than spending effort and resources on conserving species abundant elsewhere. It was also suggested that better experimental evidence was required – not all the projected impacts of climate change will necessarily happen. A note of caution was sounded, as there is evidence that some conservation interventions have been detrimental. This was not considered surprising as errors may be made where data is weak, but it is to be hoped that the majority of effort has positive benefits. The balance of probability is that if no effort is made then changes will have a negative impact. It was also suggested that a joint north/south (of Ireland) approach to the issue could be a significant advantage and opportunities existed for closer co-operation on conservation issues. Concerns were raised over communicating the complexity of these issues to different parts of the general public, it being suggested that showing the negative impact on people's lives of inaction could be one way of achieving this (though it was also noted that, to many people, the projected changes in climate were probably seen as tolerable or even desirable). Continuous effort is required to effect a gradual change in perception and, perversely, environmental catastrophes are probably assisting in this aim.

Closing remarks

In his closing remarks, the Chair noted a number of issues arising from the meeting.

- No model tells us what we must do, they draw no definitive conclusions, they simply indicate possible changes. Adaptive management offers a method for dealing with these changes and we need to learn through both experimentation and experience, by trying and learning.
- Autecology – we know a great deal about some species, aiding our interventions, but there are many where information is scarce. Therefore it is still difficult to judge how interactions within different communities or assemblages will react to climate change.
- We need to move above small scale interventions into larger scale landscape approaches to enable species to be able to move more readily
- Climate change will challenge some of the basic tenets of conservation philosophy and practice. Our perceptions may need to change, perhaps welcoming some species we currently consider non-native, our interventions changing to reflect this.

The presentations given today will be made available on the UK Committee website.

Andy Brown closed the meeting by expressing thanks to the contributors for the range of stimulating presentations and to the participants for their involvement. Thanks were also given to the Stranmillis University College for hosting the event, and to Sue Christie and the UK Committee Secretariat for organising it.

Appendix I

Financial Records

IUCN

ACCOUNT for financial year 2005 - 2006

RECEIPTS		
Balance B/F from 04/05		£9,478.88
Member Subscriptions	Financial year so far	£18,060.00
<u>Bank Interest</u>	For year (to date)	£115.85
TOTAL INCOME	(i)	£27,654.73

PAYMENTS		
Meeting Expenses	2005 AGM & Members' Meeting expenses	£2,501.75
	ExCo 42 expenses	£102.50
	ExCo 44 expenses	£17.50
	2005 York Members' Meeting expenses	£230.00
Contributions	Delegate attendance to the Committee Chair and Regional Councillor conference The Hague, February 2006	£2,000.00
Secretariat Contract	1st payment	£5,600.00
	2nd payment	£5,600.00
Website Development	"Wealth from the Wild" PDF	£70.50
<u>Bank Charges</u>	For year	£0.00
TOTAL OUTGOINGS	(ii)	£16,122.25

BALANCE (i) minus (ii)	(iii)	£11,532.4 8
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