

Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Ireland Taxon Expert Group: Terms of Reference

1. Role and scope

The Amphibians and Reptiles of Britain and Ireland Taxon Expert Group (ARBITEG) produces strategic-level advice on the conservation of herpetofauna. Its geographic scope is Britain and Ireland. ARBITEG has been set up in response to re-organisation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), yet it may advise on issues outside BAP as appropriate. ARBITEG acts as the herpetofauna “taxonomic group” for the England Biodiversity Strategy, and equivalents in other countries should they be required. It will set the agenda for herpetofauna conservation at the broad scale. ARBITEG is an advisory body, comprising representatives from statutory and non-statutory organisations.

2. Functions

ARBITEG will have the following functions:

- To act as a single point of contact for the individual or grouped Species Action Plans (SAPs), in order to simplify communication with other parts of BAP.
- To provide advice to other parts of BAP on priorities for amphibian and reptile conservation, notably to include areas for targeting agri-environment resources. This advice would normally be developed by SAPs, and would then be collated, quality assured and disseminated by ARBITEG.
- To check on progress of delivery by other parts of BAP.
- To propose targets, and review them periodically, taking advice from SAP Steering Groups.
- To assist SAP Steering Groups in disaggregating UK targets to appropriate geographic levels.
- To develop and disseminate advice on generic issues affecting herpetofauna conservation, especially monitoring, targets, research priorities, policy revision.
- To collate information of strategic importance from SAP Steering Groups, especially relating to policy, science and monitoring.
- To lobby for action on generic issues of particular importance, eg data access, legislation.
- To ensure targets are posted and actions reported on BARS, in collaboration with SAP Steering Groups.

Specific tasks in the short term may include:

In England:

- Agreeing representation on relevant Biodiversity Integration Groups, and the key actions required by these groups, making use of the recent UK sign-posting exercise.
- Identifying urgent species-focussed activities that cannot be met by the biodiversity integration groups, making use of the recent UK sign-posting exercise.
- Developing a three-year prioritised species recovery programme for each broad taxonomic group, with draft SMART targets at England level, and agreed accountabilities for delivery of the most urgent actions identified in (2).
- Providing advice to statutory agencies and relevant England Biodiversity Strategy workstreams on species’ policy requirements and obstacles to delivery.

- Ensuring that regional and local partnerships are aware of the most urgent species requirements in their areas and, where appropriate, developing joint projects with them.
- Reporting actions and their outcomes through the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) and participating in national reporting rounds as required.

[To add more for other countries if desired]

3. Membership

The following organisations are represented on ARBITEG:

- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust
- Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Natural England
- Scottish Natural Heritage.

The following groups will be invited to join ARBITEG:

- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- National Parks and Wildlife Service, Ireland
- Environment Department, States of Jersey
- Environment Department, States of Guernsey
- Department of Local Government and the Environment, Isle of Man

4. Ways of working

- Meeting frequency: Initially, ARBITEG will meet twice per year.
- ARBITEG Chair: The Chair will rotate with meetings.
- Contact: The point of contact will be Tony Gent of Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (tony.gent@arc-trust.org)
- ARBITEG aims to be flexible, efficient, proactive and pragmatic. It is expected that much work will be produced between meetings via email discussions or sub-group meetings.
- Papers and minutes will be posted on the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation website (www.arc-trust.org)

Jim Foster, Natural England,
2 August 2009.