

UK Voluntary Report for the in-depth review of the CBD programme of work on the Biological Diversity of Inland water Ecosystems. – Response to CBD Notification 2008-119.

The UK has provided links and references to various documents and websites that contain information that is directly relevant to the requests from the CBD secretariat in notification 2008-119.

The report follows the structure of the four broad themes suggested in the notification:

- i. Status and trends of, and threats to, inland water biodiversity;
- ii. The implementation of the programme of work on inland waters, including progress made towards achieving the goals, challenges and obstacles to implementation;
- iii. Capacity building needs; and
- iv. Experiences with targets and indicators at national level.

No information is given on strategic opportunities post 2010 as these issues will be dealt with separately under other COP 10 agenda items.

1. Status and trends of, and threats to, inland water biodiversity.

Inland waters are assessed at all relevant geographic scales within the UK. For the purpose of international reporting the sources of information are limited to UK scale overviews.

The 2005 UK report to Ramsar Cop 9 (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3542>) describes wetland inventory and assessment work under operational objective 1 pages 6-14. The overall conclusion is that there is no UK wide inventory or assessment of the status of inland waters but for specific types of wetlands urgently in need of conservation status information is sufficient to inform conservation action. Inventory and assessment is also undertaken sufficiently to ensure coherent protected area networks for wetlands and to manage the protected areas once designated.

One component of the UK National Biodiversity Action Plan deals with priority habitats and species. Reports on the action taken and progress made are produced every three years. The latest report was in 2006 with another due in late spring 2009. Forty-five priority habitats are included in the report, of which 7 fall under the CBD category of inland waters: Fens, Reedbeds, Lowland Raised Bogs, Mesotrophic Lakes, Eutrophic Standing Waters, Aquifer fed naturally fluctuating water bodies, and Chalk Rivers. A summary report and the facility to download the data, including details of status, trends, threats and constraints, can be found at (<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/GenPageText.aspx?id=105>). While the status of priority wetland habitats are known quite well, the trends in status present a mixed picture that differs across the UK. For the 7 priority wetland habitats the UK has 22 targets of which only one had been achieved by 2005 and only one other was on schedule (10% achieved or on schedule). This is a little worse than the average for all ecosystem types where 22 (15%) of 149 Targets have either been achieved, or are on schedule.

The status, trends and threats to inland water habitats within protected area networks are assessed through a common UK wide approach to statutory site monitoring. The latest UK overview of the site series was published in 2006 (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3520>) and the results for freshwater habitats are summarised on pages 38-52 of the habitats volume. 1704 wetland habitats were assessed across the whole UK protected area network and 61% were either in favourable or recovering condition. This compares to over 70% of all habitat

assessments that were either favourable or recovering suggesting that wetland habitats are generally fairing less well than other ecosystem types. This view is supported by the state of many wetland species and for one particular wetland habitat (Rivers and streams) which with only 37.1% of assessments in favourable or recovering condition, has the least favourable condition of any habitat type within the UK protected area network.

The site condition monitoring was combined with other relevant status and trend information and expertise to report to the European Commission on the condition of priority European Habitats listed in Annexe I, and species listed in Annex ii of the European Habitats Directive (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-4060>). Overall the condition of 17 inland water habitats were reported of which only two were in favourable condition. Although this is generally worse than for other broad habitat types reported there is some good news in that 8 of the 15 habitats in inadequate or bad condition were improving.

The overall state and condition of the countryside in Great Britain (excludes Northern Ireland) is measured through 'Countryside Survey' which reported the results of the 2007 survey in 2008. Chapter 6 summarises results for inland waters (http://www.countrysidesurvey.org.uk/pdf/reports2007/CS_UK_2007_Ch08_rev.pdf). Its main conclusions are that:

- The area of a broad suite of wetland ecosystem types increased by 2.6% between 1998 and 2007. The increase was particularly noteworthy for ponds which increased in number by 11.1%.
- Plant species richness in lowland ponds decreased. Only 8% of ponds were in good condition and the quality of lowland ponds deteriorated between 1996 and 2007.
- Plant species richness of streamsides decreased by 7.5%. Since 1990 there has been a successional change, with vegetation becoming taller and with more competitive species. Conversely the plant species richness actually within the streams increased.
- The physical characteristics of streams improved.
- Six of the top ten declining plant species were wetland species.

2. The implementation of the programme of work on inland waters, including progress made towards achieving the goals, challenges and obstacles to implementation.

The UK does not specifically measure progress towards the goals and targets of the CBD programme of work on inland waters. The elements of the CBD work programme are largely but not exclusively delivered through the four country biodiversity strategies that collectively implement the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. An overview of the full range of activities that contribute to implementation of the CBD programme of work can be found in the 2005 UK report to Ramsar COP 9 (<http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3542>) on pages 15 to 56. Information is included on legislation, environmental impact assessment practices, strategic environmental assessment, implementation of EC directives including the Water Framework Directive, sustainable development and cross-sectoral integration (mainstreaming), climate change related measures, restoration activities, measures to address alien invasive species etc. These activities take place at many local scales which defies coordination and reporting but the development of the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) (<http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/>) facilitates overview reporting against UK level targets for wetland, and other, ecosystems and allows any action to be added, linked to targets and reported.

The review of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan is close to completion and has already resulted in some notable enhancements to delivery of actions for inland waters. Three new freshwater priority habitats have been identified (Oligotrophic and Dystrophic Lakes; Ponds; and Upland Flushes, Fens and Swamps) in addition to the 7 already listed. The Chalk Rivers priority habitat is also now extended to cover all rivers. Implementation of action for priority habitats and associated species will now be overseen by cross-sectoral freshwater groups in each country that represent wide stakeholder interests. These will all be established by June 2009.

The UK has reported on threats and constraints to meeting targets for priority wetland habitats (<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/GenPageText.aspx?id=105>). Many threats are listed but inappropriate habitat management including loss of traditional practice is the most common. Other notable threats include eutrophication, other forms of pollution, flood defence, development, competition/succession, agriculture and water abstraction. Constraints are harder to summarise but those ranked most important include:

- the difficulties at working at a catchment scale especially when considering restoration;
- the perception that wetlands are not desirable compared to forests, coastal habitats and natural grasslands, for example;
- lack of knowledge and techniques to assess the condition and extent of wetlands;
- lack of tools, knowledge and resources to manage wetlands correctly;
- lack of resources to fund management of wetlands.

3. Capacity building needs

No directly relevant information available at the time of reporting.

4. Experiences with targets and indicators at national level.

UK biodiversity indicators will be updated in 2009 in time for inclusion in the fourth national report to the CBD. None of these indicators are broken down to include an inland waters component but this might be possible in future. There are no plans to develop separate suites of UK indicators for inland water ecosystems or any other ecosystem types.