

Thorne and Hatfield Conservation Forum

(here-after referred to as the Forum)

Policy on translocation of species and habitats

1 Definitions

Translocation:

moving a species or habitat within or between sites, usually within its natural geographic range (but perhaps to a new site): can be used to cover any of the following;

Re-introduction, re-establishment:

an attempt to establish a species in an area which was once part of its historical range, but from which it has been extirpated or become extinct;

Reinforcement, re-stocking, supplementation:

addition of individuals of a species to 'top up' a surviving population at a site where it occurs naturally;

Introduction:

bringing a species where it has never been (often, species not naturally occurring in Britain);

Habitat restoration:

re-establishing a habitat (and the associated species) where it used to occur and where remnants survive;

Habitat creation:

building a habitat afresh, where it has not occurred before, or where all significant components of the habitat have been lost.

Naturalised:

a species which was originally introduced into Britain, but which is now well established, reproducing and holding their own in competition with native species.

2 Single-species translocations

The following criteria should govern the circumstances where single-species translocation may be considered:

- 1 there is a strong conservation reason to consider it;
- 2 the species is definitely known to have occurred on the site/sub-site in the past;
- 3 as far as can be determined, the species is currently absent from the site;
- 4 the causes of decline or disappearance from the area are known;
- 5 conditions at the site now appear suitable for the species, and likely to remain so;
- 6 natural re-colonisation is unlikely to be effective within an acceptable timescale;
- 7 management of the site will not need to be modified greatly to suit the reintroduced species;
- 8 there will be no adverse effect on the donor population;
- 9 there will be no adverse effect on any existing species at the recipient site, either from the translocated species, or from the management which it requires;
- 10 all translocations should be fully documented, and their success monitored in the long term.

Until each of the above criteria has been addressed seriously, translocation should not take place. If all the criteria have been satisfied, translocation ***may be considered***. It

will not necessarily be a high priority for Forum resources, but the Forum would wish to be consulted on any action by another party.

It is important to be sure a species is absent from a site before attempting re-establishment. An appropriate and thorough survey should have been carried out by competent observers in 5 consecutive years before a species is assumed to be absent. Some species can survive at very low densities for many years, and some plant species may persist in the seed-bank in the soil for years or decades during which no growing plants can be found; if practicable, the existence and viability of a seed-bank should be investigated before translocation is undertaken.

A properly-conducted translocation is a very lengthy, complex and expensive process. Translocation should thus be considered only when habitat management and natural recolonisation cannot achieve the desired result. Impatience is not sufficient reason for intervention. The Forum will not take part in, or initiate, re-introductions for reasons of publicity or marketing, where there is no conservation imperative.

3 Habitat creation

In habitat creation projects, the Forum will, where necessary, advise on the introduction of plant species appropriate to the target habitat and location, and give advice and monitor management which will favour the development of habitat-specific biodiversity. Introduction of further species will be considered only after time has been allowed for natural processes to come into play, and their effects have been monitored. It is likely to concentrate on the less mobile 'keystone species' whose absence may inhibit the development of the ecosystem.

The definition of 'keystone species' is not clear-cut. It refers to species whose impact on an ecosystem is greater than would be expected from their abundance. It may include grazing animals, nectar sources, pollinators and so-called 'ecological engineers' such as ants (which can develop the physical structure of a habitat and play a major role in plant succession).

In all habitat creation schemes, British stock will always be used, and wherever possible, more local provenance will be sought.

4 Habitat translocation

The Forum opposes habitat translocation as a tool to permit development on conservation sites.

The Forum should be consulted on any proposal for habitat translocation.

5 Control and removal of introduced species

The Forum supports other organisations in the removal or eradication of introduced species before they become naturalised, in order to prevent such species becoming a threat to native flora and fauna (or to land use).

The Forum will inform a land-owner about established invasive species on individual sites where there is a risk of serious ecological damage. Control or removal may also be needed where the species are conspicuously ecologically inappropriate.

If a species is unlikely to have a significant ecological impact, its eradication would be for reasons of maintaining natural distributions and not confusing local biogeography, or gives the wrong impression to visitors, etc., rather than for practical conservation reasons. The removal of inappropriate translocations which have little or no impact on a site, and pose no threat to indigenous species, is unlikely to be a high priority for any Forum action.

6 Introduction and translocation of materials

The Forum will advise and monitor the use of materials (timber, brash, wood-chips, soil etc.) being used within a site or being introduced from another site. The latter could inadvertently introduce other plants and animals, which may be alien species.