

Ireland's response to the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation

STAKEHOLDER MEETING
National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin
28th/29th September 2005

RESULTS OF BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS AND GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

GROUP 1

TARGET 1: Widely accessible preliminary census lists of all wild plant species, and fungi, found in Ireland.

The flow of information on species within the country has been hampered by legal issues with regard to ownership and secure handling or treatment of data.

1. Historical goodwill has been compromised by the value of data to consultants or others.
2. Approval to collect specimens / info in the first place.

NEW ACTION: GBIF Protocols will be investigated by FP.

NEW ACTION: Official name vs Current name, FP to investigate

- Synonymy issue: Official name vs Current name.
- Term 'Alien' is pejorative in today's understanding. Native, Naturalised and recent introductions.
- Checklists vs. Census Lists: Quick & Dirty.
- Freshwater Algae is biggest outstanding problem.

NEW ACTION: FP to undertake a survey to determine scale of problem. Harvest info especially from overseas botanists (Diatoms etc.)

TARGET 2: A preliminary assessment of the conservation status of all known plant species in Ireland completed and made widely available.

Current status of 40+ parallel data sets: NPWS / BSBI / CEDaR / VC recorders. In order to assess the gaps in knowledge, a test comparison of ca.6 species will be undertaken to judge degrees of overlap. Atlas 2000 maps reveal the holes in our vascular plant knowledge. Fungi & Algae still remain virtually unknown in regard to status or threat.

- Legal protection (**FPO**) requires objective, scientific scrutiny of records by NPWS.
- Develop a preliminary RDB for Fungi & Algae. NPWS consultancy?
- VC Recorders to be actively encouraged to take up NPWS consultancies

NEW ACTION: Test Comparison of ca.6 species to judge +/- overlap of data

NEW MILESTONE: Working Red data list to be put on-line for public consultation

NEW MILESTONE: Gap-analysis Workshop in Sept 2006.

TARGET 3: Comprehensive and documented suite of practical solutions based on new or tested models, case studies, research and other experiences available for plant conservation and sustainable use in Ireland.

It was pointed out that there is a pressing need for a compilation of numerous other examples of sustainable management, not just those for rare or threatened plants. This target would be able to link in to existing local and national initiatives.

NEW ACTION: Compile existing management advice from Environmental NGOs, Government bodies and other organisations.

NEW MILESTONE: Provide an on-line set of (or links to) guidelines for suitable management practices and techniques for woodland, ponds, hedgerows etc.

GROUP 2

TARGET 4: At least 10 per cent of each of Ireland's plant habitats effectively conserved

- A study is needed to investigate the extent of coverage afforded to different habitats, to determine % protection. Do they all come up to 10%? e.g. Eskers, Mesotrophic grasslands.
- Effectiveness is always a major issue.
- Public support for protected habitats and areas. Environmental NGOs have much information on how developments affect designated areas.
- Provide widespread information on statutory protected areas (i.e. through 'Google Earth').
- Wildlife rangers...

TARGET 5: Protection of the most important areas for plant diversity in Ireland assured.

- Need for a document on what makes an Important Area for Plant Diversity (IAPD) in Ireland.
- Important Areas for Plant Diversity are a tool, not a bureaucratic identification, nor a designation.
- Maps cause concern, and it was suggested that publishing maps of these areas would not be a good idea.
- Areas outside SACs/NHAs are of greatest interest
- How to define 'protection assured'?
- Suggest a headline target of 80%, i.e. 25% more than already covered by statutory instruments.
- Bottom-up approach, with precedence given to local knowledge i.e. BSBI VC-recorders.
- Use of Fossitt as a standard.

NEW ACTION: Identification of important areas of vascular plant diversity by 2007.

NEW ACTION: Develop methodology and criteria for recognising Important Areas for Plant Diversity in the Republic of Ireland by July 2006.

NEW ACTION: Undertake 3 pilot studies for recognising areas, in Dublin (**DNFC**), Westmeath (Con Breen), and East Galway (**GNFC**).

NEW MILESTONE: Presentation of results of pilot studies at a meeting in September 2006, at which the methodology and criteria will also be refined.

NEW MILESTONE: Disseminate information on the significance and conservation value of IAPDs in the form of a publication based on the three Pilot studies, and launch a National Initiative.

NEW MILESTONE: Evaluate the extent to which **IAPDs** fall within protected (designated) areas.

TARGET 7: Conservation of at least 60 per cent of Ireland's threatened plant species assured in situ.

NEW ACTION: Develop species management plans for the most critically endangered species

NEW ACTION: Implement a national research programme in the conservation biology of threatened plants.

GROUP 3

TARGET 6: At least 30 per cent of production lands in Ireland managed consistent with the conservation of plant diversity

- Still largely driven by CAP.
- Coillte have already changed emphasis from timber production to forests.
- Important to discuss future changes in REPS with Dept. of Agriculture. In particular for the provision of more options for plant conservation within the scheme.
- Change in land use/management or area. Reduced inputs/abandonment-increased invasiveness.
- A percentage figure for the amount of organic agriculture will give a measure.
- Chemical usage.
- Hedgerow management has been tackled in detail by the County Hedgerow Survey reports (Westmeath, Roscommon, Laois and Offaly).

NEW ACTION: Make recommendations from hedgerow survey reports widely available.

TARGET 9: Conserve the genetic diversity of all known indigenous traditional Irish varieties of crop plants, landraces and crop relatives as well as other socio-economically valuable plant species.

- Diluting genetic diversity through inter breeding.
- Decline is enormous and rapid, especially of grain crops.
- Possible opportunity to approach Guinness for funding the collection of grain crops, particularly Malting Barleys, and others as a spin off.
- Irish Seedsavers Association are already carrying out a substantial amount of this work, and are already undertaking many of the actions listed.

TARGET 10: Management plans in place for at least 10 major alien species that threaten plants, plant communities and associated habitats and ecosystems in Ireland.

1. Existing baseline.

Develop Management Plans for 'Top Ten' invaders. Comprehensive list (Reynolds 2002) is already out of date. Possibly more information in QUERCUS report?

- Priority listing of possible 10-12 species.
- Detailed information on few species (Rhododendron, Gunnera, Heracleum, Fallopia)

2. Knowledge Gaps

Refine priority listing-fully account for health, amenity, environmental, visual impact-aesthetic issues

- Finer scale distribution maps required (local, regional and national scales). Invest in remote approaches, as well as local analyses using GPS. Habitat/environmental details also required
- Increase monitoring-use local recorders, heritage officers, state/semi-state organisations, third level Institutions. BUT...needs to be co-ordinated!
- Better scientific understanding of long-term impacts on ecosystems
- Time-impact assessments (Hindcasting) should lead to better predictions of future impacts
- Identification of future invaders
- Future predictions required-account for climate(environmental) change and habitat/land-use change-database of information
- Can we make predictions on the basis of the British or other countries experience?
- Remarkable lack of understanding of the biology of any invasive species.
- all feeds in to the identification of appropriate management/control options

3. Action (Management) Plan-Possible Priorities

- Detailed mapping required, together with comprehensive habitat/biodiversity assessments
- Work directed at understanding of the biology/genetics/origins
- Use a range of control measures-restriction at point of entry (easily identified invasives), raise public awareness, tailored and tested eradication. Practicality/economics need investigating
- Legislation

4 Capacity to Achieve Target/Objectives

- Basic skills exist in Universities, State bodies, County Councils etc.
- Requires a coordinated, professional approach
- Funding would be required if done outside the state bodies
- Interactions with other organizations/groups may be important-eg. EU DAISIE project-European alien species database/alien species information list/distribution maps; QUERCUS

NEW ACTION: Develop priority list of 10-12 species.

NEW MILESTONE: Develop an efficient target-10 webpage, as part of the GSPC page, which will co-ordinate actions and organisations in highlighting or controlling problem species.

TARGET 12: All plant-based products derived from Irish wild plants harvested from sustainably managed sources.

- Potential uses of alien plants/plant products produced from sustainable systems.
- Seaweed harvesting project being undertaken by Mike Guiry.

GROUP 4

TARGET 13: Safeguard the traditional practices based on plant resources, and their associated knowledge, that are sustainable, and that support local communities and their livelihoods in Ireland.

- Existing groups include Irish basket-makers association, the Hedge-Laying Society of Ireland, the Coppice Association of Ireland, the Thatchers guild.
- Heritage Council could publish a call for proposals for local projects on plant folklore etc. Could we arrive at an Irish Flora Hibernica ?

TARGET 14: Ensure that plant conservation and biodiversity issues are incorporated into the formal educational curricula at all levels in Ireland, and in informal education and national public awareness programmes.

- Mission to celebrate the wonder and variety of plants.
- Public much less aware of plants vs. animals, needs to be balanced.
- Lack of appreciation of the economic value of plants.
- An overall strategy needs to be developed, to consider all target audiences.
- First step is for appropriately qualified education officers to be appointed to NBG and NPWS. The appointees would have to work in the community at large as well as at their work base – the Zoo and the Art institutions already have these.
- Importance of Good News stories, but must not reinforce complacency.
- To widen skills base we need a co-ordinated programme of vocational training and skills building in plant ecology by 2010.
- Need for better communication within research community.
- Work of disseminating information gathered or generated by research was being ignored. An efficient clearing-house for this information was needed.
- Fostering field-clubs, Contact people already working in schools, Irish Seedsavers, Irish Environmental Education Centre.

REMOVE ACTION: re exhibition at NBG.

NEW ACTION: Develop resources for primary school teachers to provide interactive and captivating materials, ~~for local plant identification~~ but not focussed too much on plant identification, and not rigidly on native plants, if non-native spp illustrate a point better.

NEW MILESTONE: 20% of schools visited by an education officer by 2010, and regularly thereafter.

NEW MILESTONE: Every secondary school student should visit the National Botanic Gardens at least once by 2010.

NEW MILESTONE: A series of leaflets on themes, such as carnivorous plants, crop relatives etc. by 2008. Teagasc would be amenable to disseminating these and incorporating their logo.

OTHER TARGETS

TARGET 8: All threatened Irish plant species in accessible ex situ collections, and all Critically Endangered and Endangered category species included in effective conservation management programmes.

In March 2005, a 2-day PlantNetwork conference was held at the National Botanic Gardens, and a plan has been put in place to progress this target in British and Irish gardens. (www.plantnetwork.org/projects/nbgtarget8.pdf).

TARGET 11: No species of wild flora endangered by international trade

This target is part of other undertakings, especially in regard to CITES. However there is no room for complacency in appreciating the degree to which derivatives may obscure the true impact of some of Ireland's imports, e.g. the growth in alternative herbal medicines, many of which are collected in an unsustainable manner, (Ginseng etc.).

PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

TARGET 15: The number of trained people working with appropriate facilities in plant conservation increased, as required, to achieve the targets of this Strategy.

There will always be a shortage of people.

TARGET 16: A broadly-based Irish network for plant conservation established to achieve the targets for this strategy.

The need for regular meetings was seen as essential, rather than simply having a website.

NEW ACTION: Establish a webpage giving up to date progress on the targets in this strategy, as well as news and current activities in Plant conservation in Ireland generally.

NEW MILESTONE: 2006 meeting of Network to look at Important Areas for Plant Diversity pilot studies, a preliminary Red Data List, and review other targets.

Target	Main Hindrances/Problems to overcome	Main Advocate(s)
1: Records	Flow of Information.	BSBI/field botanists/NBG
2: RDB	Baseline, particularly of cryptogamic groups.	NPWS/NBG/BSBI/TCD
3: Protocols	Gathering and compiling available information and data	NPWS/TCD/UCD/UCG/an Taisce/ENGOS
4: Protected Areas	Effectiveness	NPWS/ENGOS
5: Important Areas of Plant Diversity	Methodology for selection	NBG/DNFC/GNFC/NPWS
6: Production lands	CAP, Indicators, REPS reform	Dept. of Agriculture
7: in situ	Capacity	TCD/NBG
8: ex situ		PlantNetwork
9: Crops	Funding of seed-banks and growing out	Seed Savers, Genetics Trust
10: Invasive Aliens	A Plan/Network	UCD/NBG
11: International trade		CITES/Customs
12: Wild harvest		
13: Traditional Practice	Lack of knowledge	
14: Public Awareness	Strategy, Focus	?NPWS/ENFO/NBG
15: Human Capacity		
16: Network		GSPC Focal Point website