Pesticides Forum: Biodiversity Policy and delivery

Dr Sarah Webster
Head of UK Biodiversity Unit, Defra
Structure of Presentation

- What is our policy?
- Outcomes and Progress
- Statutory provisions
- Policy mainstreaming
- Interactions with pesticides
To halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people
Why do we have this policy?
Our Biodiversity 2020 Strategy sets out four priority areas for action.....

- Integrated, large-scale approach to conservation (‘bigger, better, more and joined-up’ habitats)
- People at the heart of biodiversity policy
- Reducing environmental pressures (includes mainstreaming and issues such as pesticides)
- Improving our knowledge
... and some challenging outcomes:

- 90% of priority habitats in favourable or recovering condition
- 50% of SSSIs in favourable condition while 95% remain in favourable or recovering condition
- 200,000ha of new priority habitat
- 17% of land and inland water important for biodiversity conserved through integrated management approaches, including NIAs
- 15% of degraded ecosystem restored as contribution to climate change measures
- Overall improvement in wildlife and no human induced extinctions of threatened species
How do we measure our progress?

The 2013 *Biodiversity 2020* indicators tell a mixed story:

- More is being done to protect wildlife
- The extent of protected areas on land and at sea has increased
- But pressures on wildlife remain high
- Despite clear action and some success, many species and habitats are still in decline
- Integrating biodiversity into other sectors will be crucial

**Notes:** 1. Figures in brackets give number of species. 2. Within each category, darker lines show unsmoothed data and paler lines of the same colour show smoothed trend data.
There are statutory provisions - EU Birds and Habitats Directives

- EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EC) and EU Birds Directive underpin the EU’s nature conservation policy – SAC/SPA
- Transposed in England through:
  - Habitats and Species Regs 2010;
  - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and
  - Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regs 2007
And at the England level – SSSIs are our best wildlife and geological sites

- Over 4,100 (8% of England)
- 70% (by area) also EU sites
- Initially to protect the best examples, now to protect all remaining examples
- NE monitor SSSI series, notifies new sites and helps landowners improve them
On species.....

• Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 makes it illegal (some exceptions) to kill, injure or take any native wild bird or destroy birds’ eggs or nest in use
• Illegal to kill, injure or take Schedule 5 animals or to pick, uproot or destroy Schedule 8 plants
• The Act also aims to prevent establishment of non-native species harmful to native wildlife (Schedule 9)
• SPAs/SACs/SSSIs can be designated because of species interest
• Wildlife legislation Law Commission review
But to achieve our outcomes, we need to mainstream biodiversity with other policies....

CAP Reform:

Greening Pillar 1

• Ecological focus areas
• Voluntary measures, CFE

Pillar 2

• 12% modulation
• NELMS targeting
• Synergies with water
‘Mainstreaming’ goes beyond CAP reform...

• **Planning:**
  - National Planning Policy Framework
  - Ecological Networks
  - Priority Species and Habitats

• **Water:**

• **Low carbon energy generation:**
  - Incorporating biodiversity into DECC 2050 pathways calculator
  - Influencing Govt position to ILUC that reflects biodiversity concerns
  - Renewable Energy Directive
  - Biomass – promoting adoption of voluntary sustainability standards
Our policies are continually developing in partnership with others ...

- Nature Improvement Areas
- Local Nature Partnerships
- Habitats Directive Review/Major Infrastructure Unit
- New Environmental Land Management Scheme
- Reducing carbon emissions
- Biodiversity Offsets
- Payments for Ecosystem Services
- National Pollinator Strategy
- Pesticides policy
Mechanisms for delivering policy objectives

Statutory mechanisms include:
- Formal management agreements for protected sites (SSSIs)
- Planning consent provisions
- Cross compliance
- Compulsory purchase (last resort)

Voluntary mechanisms includes:
- Agri-environment and EWGS
- Advice (CFE)
- Nature Improvement Areas
On biodiversity interactions with pesticides....

- Pesticides tightly regulated under EU law
- Use of pesticides is only permitted if no unacceptable risks to people or to the environment
- UK National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides published February 2013 contains a commitment to encourage uptake of Integrated Pest Management
Neonicotinoid insecticides are a particular issue

- Concerns raised about effects of neonicotinoid insecticides on honeybees and wild pollinators
- UK Government view is that the evidence does not suggest that harmful effects are likely in field conditions
- EU has restricted neonicotinoid use but will review in 2015
- Companies are required to generate new data. Government is considering whether more is required.
Conservationists do use pesticides – notably on Invasive Non-native species

- Insects/invertebrates - such as Oak processionary moth/Asian hornet/crayfish
- Plants - glyphosate for Japanese Knotweed/Hogweed as well as a wide range of other INNS plants
- Fish - rotenone is being used by the EA fish control team for the eradication of Topmouth gudgeon
- Mammals - warfarin for squirrels/rats
- Plants and invertebrates are by far the most common target organisms
But poisoning of wild birds remains a concern

- Raptor persecution is a UK Wildlife Crime priority
- Poisoning of birds of prey is of concern
- It is often deliberate
- It can be accidental (e.g. bird picks up poison intended for pest species)
- Any carcass found where poisoning is suspected goes into the Wildlife Incident Investigation Scheme (WIIS) for analysis
- Carbofuran is commonly used
Confirmed Bird of Prey Poisoning Incidents

Confirmed Bird of Prey Poisoning Incidents

Confirmed Bird of Prey Poisoning Incidents
Why have people got these poisons?

• In England, pesticides may only be used where they are approved.
• The pesticides commonly used in wildlife poisoning incidents have either never been approved for use or had their approval revoked.
• Carbofuran is commonly used but had its approval revoked in 2001.
• This means it is an offence under UK pesticide legislation to advertise, sell, supply, store or use it.
• This offence carries, on conviction, an unlimited fine.