Minutes of Northumberland National Park Authority
Special Meeting 27 April 2018 approved 11 July 2018
The Ecologist provided a presentation to supplement her report; drew attention to the five key questions posed by Natural England (Section 5), highlighted a number of areas and invited questions and comments from members.

General comments from members

- **Proposed breeding programme for four male/two female population:** members said it would have been helpful to have an idea of this to help with deliberations. The Ecologist said Natural England had not indicated there was any breeding programme in place, but advised lynx would be tagged non-neutered adults and conditions would have to be right for them to breed in the first place. Due to their secretive nature it would be unlikely any offspring could be tagged although as the cubs stay with the female for up to three years, it could be possible to track them.

- **Eurasian Lynx’ roaming range:** members asked what consultation had there been with the Border’s authorities. The Ecologist said lynx, being a solitary animal, seldom roamed. With regard to discussions with the Borders, the Ecologist drew attention to paragraph 5 (e) relating to Lynx UK Trust local consultation document.

- **Eurasian Lynx genetic issues:** members mentioned the population in the Dura Mountains where there had been problems with genetic issues resulting from in-breeding; members asked if there was any data available that might be helpful in forecasting future problems.

- **Population model:** Ecologist advised the current population model uses 100 year old data; reminded members the lynx successfully breeding depended on habitat and available prey; and the chain of lynx in the proposed trial would be sourced from different Eurasian lynx populations to mitigate any potential for genetic problems.

- **Lynx UK Trust’s motivation was for making the application:** the Ecologist said lynx were part of Britain’s native fauna, though last seen in AD600, and whilst it could be assumed this apex predator could have an impact on the ecosystem the environment to-day is significantly different to AD600 though evidence from successful populations in other countries shows it is likely the lynx could survive successfully in the proposed environment.

- **Prey issues e.g. effect on roe deer numbers:** members asked if the roe deer population became compromised might the lynx look elsewhere for prey. The Ecologist said there did not appear to be any evidence of any likely impact on other species such as cattle as lynx did not view them as a prey item as they were adapted to roe deer, so it was unlikely lynx would actively target cattle. However there was some evidence to show lynx could take bigger prey such as the fawn of larger deer species.

- **Tracking the lynx:** members enquired about the proposed methodology for tracking the lynx, and what would happen if this failed, noting their preferred habitat was dense forest and rocky outcrops. The Ecologist said that so far, there was no evidence of any criteria or baselines in place for such measurements.

- **Other:** Consultations - members felt the consultation exercise could have been more extensive, incorporating a wider range of individuals, communities and organisations. Data and reference information – members noted some of the data and information referred to was out of date.

Discussion on questions asked by Natural England

Members, taking cognisance of research undertaken and IUCN guidelines when considering the proposal, generally felt further information was required as some areas were unclear, including:
Q 1: are objectives of proposed project clear and will methods outlined allow these to be met
- though there were guidelines on compensation for loss of livestock, there were no guidelines for farmers about shooting lynx if found killing livestock. The Ecologist confirmed there were no guidelines in place for such eventualities and agreed this should be clarified.
- the impact on forestry as there was insufficient information on Kielder Forest Management for example. The Ecologist advised that unlike in AD600, Kielder was now managed forest and as an ambush predator, lynx were well suited to this environment.
- lack of information on baseline capture of, and impact on, other species and ecosystems including the impact of, and on, any decrease of roe deer population.

Q 2: is location of project suitable for a trial of this nature
- unclear of the real reason for the trial e.g. was it to test the Kielder location for a trial, for a full re-introduction or gather information to inform a reintroduction in another part of the country
- some recent research showed the Kielder area could not support a lynx population, and could proposed trial area sustain a viable lynx population. The Ecologist said the minimal viable population appears to be 250 lynx and their success was dependent on prey density and range. A fundamental question was whether or not the population location was suitable for a full introduction if the trial was deemed successful.
- noted the area around Kielder was already predator-heavy which was having an impact on some species. The Ecologist confirmed that though lynx were ambush predators, there was potential for them to drift to the forest edge and take ‘low branch fruit’ such as birds.
- asked if permission from all the landowners in the area had been sought, including those over the border and recommended this be sought

Q 3: are potential social and economic costs and benefits accurately evaluated and are there activities existing or planned that are not included
- queried the two survey methods, including one elective method, used to calculate the estimates of benefits to tourism and recreation;
- members found difficulty in untangling the case for the proposed trial re-introduction —v- a full introduction therefore felt it would be more difficult to learn anything from the trial regarding visitor potential;
- asked given the secretive nature of the lynx, would sightings even be possible;
- members felt the Lynx Trust should be more engaged with communities especially with regard to the tourism impact, both financial and numbers of tourists and more effective negotiation and development of opportunities with local communities would need to be considered and the commitment of communities to be involved obtained;
- members felt that anticipated visitors would fall into different categories e.g. those who would visit once and use a viewing platform in a designated area, dedicated people who come to the area anyway with sighting the lynx being an added benefit; could visitors drive the lynx away to other habitats;
- members queried the perceived amount of money that could be gained from visitors against costs that may arise from putting infrastructure in place to support them
- regarding the cost benefit analysis members felt this could not be relied on e.g. some of the data used to support this are now out of date plus the confusion regarding which of the costs related to the trial and which to a full re-introduction;

Q5: Has public consultation exercise captured the relevant stakeholders
- members felt more needed to be done to engage other stakeholders, individuals and communities and a more comprehensive consultation carried out;
- not all people were against the re-introduction of lynx and some could see the benefit; lynx proposals had brought some communities together; some people e.g. farmers were concerned; it was important therefore that a balanced view was obtained;
- the consultation should cover a wider area including areas outside the Park boundaries;
• the IUCN guidelines remained the barometer for assessing the proposed trial re-introduction and members felt that these guidelines had not been fully addressed especially during the consultation phase;
• members queried whether or not people were clear they were being consulted on a trial introduction as opposed to a full re-introduction and implications of both.

Conclusions
The Chairman summed up the discussions and said the Authority could not assume that Natural England would ask us for further input or that there would be an opportunity for member to discuss the matter again. The Chairman thanked members for their input to discussions, many of the comments which would help with the preparation of the response to Natural England to be sent by the end of April. The response would highlight some of the detailed points made by members during their discussions and to urge Natural England to consider the Authority’s advice going forward. The main conclusions were:

• confusion between a trial introduction of six lynx and a full re-introduction and believed the two were inextricably linked when considering the location of the proposed trial;
• concerned at the suitability of the Kielder area for a full introduction from information made available;
• felt that Natural England should consider both the proposed trial and a full re-introduction at the same time as one could inform the other; and
• recommended more effective and wider consultation should be undertaken.

There being no further matters to discuss, the Chairman referred to recommendations (a) and (b) in the report, proposed by Mr Mike Bell, seconded by Mr Peter Murray and approved by members who

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<td>a) discuss proposals for a time-limited trial re-introduction of six Eurasian Lynx to the Kielder Forest area and provide Natural England by the end of April 2018 with an opinion and comments to the questions posed by Natural England based on the discussion given in section 6 and outlined section 8 in the report for the Special Authority meeting on 27 April 2018; and</td>
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<td>b) provide any further comments to Natural England as it deems necessary.</td>
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Addendum: a copy of the letter sent to Natural England is attached to the Minutes.