

**AEWA IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW PROCESS (IRP)
“On-the-spot Assessment Mission in Conjunction
with the Bern Convention”**

**POSSIBLE IMPACT OF ICELANDIC FORESTRY POLICY ON MIGRATORY
WATERBIRDS**

Professor Colin A Galbraith and Mr Dave Pritchard

Terms of Reference

- **Objective 1:** “To assess the projected impact of the Icelandic forestry policy on the populations of AEWA listed migratory waterbird species, on their habitats, in particular wetlands, and their ecosystem services”
- **Objective 2:** “To identify and consider the possible cumulative impacts on the waterbird habitats alongside possible afforestation from other factors.....”.

Terms of Reference

- **Objective 3:** “To consider whether the Icelandic forestry policy complies with the obligations of Iceland under AEWa and Bern”.
- **Objective 4:** “To review the progress made so far by the Government of Iceland in response to Bern Convention Recommendation No. 96 (2002)”.

Terms of Reference

- **Objective 5:** “To compile recommendations to the Government of Iceland on practical measures for the future planning, evaluating, consulting upon and implementing afforestation activities in Iceland, as well as maintaining and restoring wetland values and services...”
- **Objective 6:** “To propose a monitoring plan for the implementation of the recommendations”.

Waterbirds in Iceland

BREEDING

- Greylag goose *Anser anser* 20,000-30,00 pairs 16-17% of European population.
- Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* the *islandicus* subspecies. 600,000-750,000 individuals c75% of the European population and 99% of
- Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* 930,000 individuals 42-54% of the European population.
- Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* the *psammodroma* sub species. 30,000-50,000 pairs 23-25% of the European population. 45-52% of
- Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 47,000 individuals 15-18% of the European population. 59% of the African-Eurasian Flyway population. 100% of the world population of the *islandica* subspecies.

Waterbirds in Iceland

- **BREEDING**

- Redshank *Tringa totanus* population of the *robusta* subspecies. 150,000 - 400,000 individual 18-23% of the European population. 100% of the world
- Purple sandpiper *Calidris maritima* the *littoralis* subspecies. 90,000 individuals 36-40% of the European population. 100% of the world population of
- Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* of the *faroensis* subspecies. 180,000-300,000 pairs 16-19% of the European population. 95% of the world population
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina* of the *schinzii* subspecies. 200,000-300,000 pairs 53-67% of European population. 85-95% of the world population
- Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* 30,000-50,000 pairs 23-35% of the European population.
- Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* 40-50 pairs Small populations compared with world population of c2M, but of important local interest in the region.

- **PASSAGE**

- Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris* 22,200 individuals 100% of the world population.

The Review Process

- Agreed ToRs
- Background information – Government of Iceland
- Mission Team
- Mission to Iceland – to meet stakeholders and to assess position
- Report – summary of situation as assessed by the Mission Team
- Package of recommendations
- Report to Bern Standing Committee
- Report to AEWA Standing Committee

So what are findings of the Review?

Short-term priorities – by end 2017

- **Producing an action schedule**
- **Launching an implementation support project** - *Finalise and activate as soon as possible the proposed contract between the Environment Ministry and IINH*
- **Completing the Emerald Network in Iceland** - *Accelerate significantly Iceland's work towards its contribution to the international Emerald Network of sites so this can be completed by the end of 2017*

Short-term priorities – by end 2017

- **Implementing a Strategic Environmental Assessment of forestry** -
Implement urgently the provisions in the 2006 legislation for Strategic Environmental Assessment of regional afforestation programmes, and of those Municipal plans
- **Developing a national indicative forestry strategy in the short term for full implementation over the longer term** - *have the aim of meeting current afforestation targets while minimising negative effects on species or habitats of conservation importance*
- **Improving the monitoring of waterbirds and their habitats** - *launch with effect from 2017 an appropriately-resourced country-wide scheme for long-term monitoring of waterbirds and their habitats*

Medium-term priorities – by mid 2019

- **Screening for Environmental Impact Assessments** - *Continue to give priority to the screening of afforestation proposals to determine the need for Environmental Impact Assessment according to case-specific judgements*
- **Using positive opportunities associated with planting plans** - *Make full use of the opportunity provided by the negotiation of individual planting agreements with landowners to provide advice and attach appropriate conditions to any grant aid*
- **Improving cross-sectoral coordination** - *Undertake a review of existing formalised systems for liaison, consultation and equitable input to decision-making in planning and management of forestry across the various departments and agencies*
- **Updating and implementing Iceland's NBSAP** - *Update Iceland's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, incorporating provisions relating to forestry policy and migratory waterbirds*

Longer-term priorities – by end 2020

- **Confirming priorities for research** - *gathering better Iceland-specific evidence on the ecological mechanisms by which afforestation may impact upon birds and other biodiversity.*
- **Updating good practice guidance - to include (for example):**
 - *the Bern Convention's draft Code of Conduct on plantation forestry and invasive alien trees;*
 - *more advice (especially to help municipalities) on EIA and planning decisions;*
 - *updated information on the location of sensitive habitats and important sites;*
 - *avoidance of sites that support important bird populations (irrespective of habitat quality); and*
 - *setting back plantation boundaries to provide buffer zones for reducing “edge effects” on wetlands.*

Longer-term priorities – by end 2020

- **Exploring options for introducing positive incentives** - *explore the scope and possibilities for introducing State-funded “positive” financial incentives for land management in favour of nature conservation*
- **Implementing fully a national indicative forestry strategy –**
 - *have the aim of meeting current afforestation targets while minimising negative effects on species or habitats of conservation importance (including both intact and modified wetlands);*
 - *use the most recent IINH maps and other data, including waterbird and wetland distribution data and the identified ASCIs, to identify zones of different degrees of presumption for and against planting;*
 - *be linked to the tiered system of decision-making set out in Iceland’s Environmental Impact Assessment legislation; and*
 - *be guided by the conservation priorities and good practice standards referred to in the present report.*

Bern Convention Recommendation No. 96 (2002)

These actions now superseded by the present Review?

- **2002 Recommended action 1:** Carry out an overall environmental impact assessment of afforestation policy so as to be able to evaluate how present and future afforestation of lowlands may affect habitats and species protected under the Convention.
- **2002 Recommended action 2:** Map, as a matter of urgency, areas of high biological value in Iceland so that such information may be used both for guidance to the planning process and to identify “Areas of Special Conservation Interest” referred to in Recommendation No. 16 (1989) of the Standing Committee
- **2002 Recommended action 3:** Support and encourage afforestation giving priority to areas known to have reduced biodiversity value, such as eroded areas or heavily used farmland, avoiding as much as possible areas of bird interest or partially drained wetlands which might be easily restored to their former condition.

Bern Convention Recommendation No. 96 (2002)

- **2002 Recommended action 4:** Introduce as a matter of urgency a system of statutory consultation between the Forest, Nature and Planning Agencies for new afforestation schemes up to 200 ha, promoting co-ordination and synergy among the different departments concerned; involve the local authorities and the civil societies in the consultation process in the most appropriate manner; and establish in that framework an appeal mechanism to solve discrepancies
- **2002 Recommended action 5:** Consider establishing a networking of environmental data that would be suitable for Icelandic data providers and users
- **2002 Recommended action 6:** Draft and implement a National Strategy for biological diversity in Iceland
- **2002 Recommended action 7:** Designate areas for inclusion in the Convention's Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest.

Thoughts for the future

- Bern Convention Recommendation No. 96 (2002) - this Report **an opportunity to move forward**
- Implementation of recommendations when **taken together provides a “new start”**
- **Future holistic approach – people; waterbirds and their habitats together**

Thank you

- **Government of Iceland**
- **Mission Team**
- **Stakeholders** who took time to provide comments and to meet the Mission team
- **Secretariats** of AEWA and of Bern Convention