



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Defra bovine TB citizen dialogue

Cross-cutting summary

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Contents

Introduction1

 Context and background1

 Overview of the approach2

Findings from the citizen dialogue on bovine TB4

 Stakeholder workshops4

 Public workshops6

 Online engagement7

 Cross-cutting implications9

Appendix 1 Objectives of the dialogue.....11

Introduction

This report summarises the findings from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) citizen dialogue¹ on bovine tuberculosis (bTB), carried out between September and December 2013.²

In June 2013, the OPM Group (Office for Public Management and Dialogue by Design) was commissioned by Defra, with part-funding and support from Sciencewise³, to conduct a citizen dialogue on the future strategic direction of bTB policy. This project engaged public and stakeholder participants in a dialogue on Defra's draft Strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis-Free (OTF) status for England. The dialogue comprised three strands: stakeholder workshops, reconvened public workshops, and online public engagement.

The project-wide objectives and sub-objectives for each strand of the dialogue are included in [Appendix 1](#). This dialogue overlapped a [public consultation](#) on the content of the draft Strategy, which ran from 4 July to 26 September 2013.

Context and background

In July 2013, Defra published a draft Strategy for achieving OTF status for England over a 25-year period whilst maintaining a sustainable livestock industry. The Strategy sets out how the aim will be achieved through greater partnership working, increasingly industry-led implementation and fair sharing of the associated costs. The aim of the dialogue was to understand participants' views on the measures and the approach to delivering them, as outlined in the Strategy.

Badger culling is one of the control measures included in the draft Strategy. In December 2011, Defra announced that badger culling would be carried out as part of a policy of badger control. Pilot badger culls began in Gloucestershire and Somerset in August/September 2013. Licences issued by Natural England allowed trained operators, employed by farmer-led companies, to carry out controlled shooting of free-ranging badgers, with the costs being borne by farmers and landowners. The decision on a wider roll out of controlled shooting as a culling method will follow a report delivered by the Independent Expert Panel on its effectiveness, humaneness and safety.

¹ Dialogue, as understood by Sciencewise, brings together publics, policy makers, scientists and other experts to deliberate on national public policy issues involving science and technology. The findings generated can help policy makers and the government to make better decisions that reflect public values and societal implications; increase legitimacy for tough decisions; demonstrate accountability in public investment and overcome entrenched positions to enable policy to move forward.

² A separate report has been written for each of the three strands in this project and the reader should refer to these for detailed accounts of the project approaches and findings.

³ The Sciencewise programme is funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Sciencewise aims to improve policy making involving science and technology across Government by increasing the effectiveness with which public dialogue is used, and encouraging its wider use where appropriate to ensure public views are considered as part of the evidence base.

www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk

The badger culls received significant media attention at the time the dialogue events were taking place. Hence, while the aim of the dialogue was to focus on the Strategy as a whole (and the workshops were facilitated to ensure this wider discussion), participants' focus often turned to the efficacy and ethics of this form of badger control.

Overview of the approach

This synthesis report brings together the findings from the three strands of work that comprise this dialogue project⁴.

The three separate strands summarised in this report are:

- **Ten stakeholder workshops across England.** These workshops aimed to explore stakeholder views on Defra's draft Strategy and were held in locations within each of the three geographical areas defined in the draft Strategy: the High Risk Area, the Edge Area and the Low Risk Area. Each area has its own objectives and sub-strategy that supports the Strategy's overarching aim. The workshops were attended by a range of stakeholders, 258 people in total, including farmers and farming organisations, vets and veterinary organisations, livestock auctioneers, wildlife and environment organisations, local authorities, supply chain representatives and academics. Workshops were attended by representatives from Defra and the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency
- **Three sets of recruited, reconvened public dialogue workshops.** These events took place on Saturdays in autumn 2013 in three locations across England: Birmingham, Exeter and Newcastle. Workshop locations were selected to ensure coverage of the three geographical areas defined in the draft Strategy described above. Each workshop was reconvened in the same location two weeks later. A sample of approximately 40 members of the general public attended each workshop, with a total of 111 participants across the three locations. Participants were recruited, to broadly reflect the diversity of the local population. Workshops were attended by representatives from Defra and the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency, as well as academic experts on bTB.
- **Online engagement with recruited members of the public.** The online engagement, which used an online research tool called Vizzata⁵, took place from 28 November until 9 December 2013. The online engagement was designed to complement the reconvened workshops process, using similar materials to those used in the workshops, and broadly mirroring the workshop process. The online engagement aimed to triangulate the findings from the public workshops and to assess the feasibility of using an online platform to interact with and gain feedback from a recruited sample of the public. Sixty-five members of the general public were recruited to take part in the formal process.

The table on the following page provides a summary of the different groups of people who took part in the dialogue, how many participated, and how they were selected.

⁴ The dialogue was in line with "The Government's Approach to Public Dialogue on Science and Technology"
<http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/assets/Uploads/Publications/Sciencewise-Guiding-PrinciplesEF12-Nov-13.pdf>

⁵ For more information please see Vizzata's website: <http://www.vizzata.com/>

Fig 1: Summary of participants in the dialogue

| Dialogue strand | Participants | Selection method | Number of participants |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Stakeholder workshops | People directly or indirectly affected by bTB and/or its controls, including vets, farmers and wildlife groups | Self-selecting: target groups and individuals invited to attend directly or through farming, vet and wildlife group intermediaries | 258 participants across ten locations |
| Reconvened public dialogue workshops | Members of the public | Purposively recruited to a quota sample ⁶ | 111 participants across three locations |
| Public online engagement | Members of the public | Purposively recruited to a quota sample | 65 participants |

When reading this report, and the reports for each individual strand, it is important to keep the following points in mind:

- The focus and level of detail of the discussions and comments varied across the three strands of the dialogue due to differences in participants' knowledge of bTB and the time available for participants to engage with the content of the Strategy.
- Sampling differed in the public and stakeholder strands. Participants in the public dialogue workshops and online engagement strand were purposively recruited to a quota sample. Participants in the stakeholder workshops were self-selecting. Please see the reports for each strand for sampling criteria and a breakdown of participants represented.
- This project used qualitative methods and as such provides illustrative rather than representative data. Qualitative approaches are not about identifying the prevalence or distribution of a phenomenon, or making claims about the whole population from researching a sample. The approach aimed to gain an understanding of attitudes and opinions and why people hold them. It focuses on participants' insights, attitudes and concerns and how these change over the course of the dialogue, in response to information and deliberation.

⁶ Please see the Appendices of the public dialogue workshops report for the sampling criteria.

Findings from the citizen dialogue on bovine TB

Participants across the three strands agreed broadly on the overall aim of the Strategy, proposals for greater partnership working and the need for better communication of information on bTB. There was less agreement on the reasons for controlling bTB and the most appropriate cattle and wildlife measures to use.

The headline findings from the three strands of the public dialogue are presented below, followed by a cross-cutting summary which relates the findings to the objectives of the dialogue.

Stakeholder workshops

Cattle measures and surveillance

- Stakeholders widely supported measures to provide more information for farmers buying cattle. Voluntary risk-based trading was seen as a good way to do this, although there were concerns about non-compliance, the method for calculating risk and the potential to develop a two-tier trading system which could penalise farmers in the high risk areas. Low risk and edge area stakeholders expressed a strong preference for compulsory rather than voluntary risk-based trading due to concerns about uptake and usage of the scheme.
- Stakeholders supported encouraging good biosecurity practices. However, some participants were concerned about linking compensation to biosecurity to achieve this. These concerns arose from the perceived difficulty of defining and measuring good biosecurity and from participants' doubts that on-farm biosecurity measures were sufficient to protect against bTB infection.
- There was support for more localised strategies, informed by improved epidemiological investigations following identification of bTB infection in a herd. However, some felt that the geographical boundaries of the three risk areas set out in the Strategy could be improved by taking into account contextual factors such as the boundaries of farms and whether these boundaries crossed risk areas.
- There was widespread support amongst participants for enhanced slaughterhouse surveillance and closer monitoring of slaughterhouse performance.
- There was general support for increased routine testing and surveillance in the low risk area in order to identify outbreaks at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Some stakeholders felt that a stricter cattle control regime in the high risk area would be undermined by the prevalence of bTB in local wildlife, posing a threat of badger-to-cattle transmission.

Badger controls and surveillance

- Stakeholders agreed that wildlife control measures play an important part in the Strategy to eradicate bTB, but opinions differed on the most appropriate approach.

- Farming industry and vet stakeholders - particularly in the high risk area workshops - supported the wider roll out of a badger cull. There were also calls for other measures focused on badgers, including the repeal of the Protection of Badgers Act, relaxed requirements for obtaining a culling licence and the use of sett-based alternative culling methods. These stakeholders saw wildlife control as a pivotal part of the Strategy's success, without which the effectiveness of other measures would be compromised.
- Wildlife groups were broadly very strongly opposed to badger culling and called for greater focus on cattle control measures and the wider deployment of a badger TB vaccination programme. They contended that badger culling would not reduce the disease incidence in cattle to the extent stated by Defra, due to perturbation and the use of a different methodology and management process to that used during the Randomised Badger Culling Trial.
- Stakeholders agreed on the need for better surveillance of bTB in badgers. They felt there was currently little understanding about the infection status of badgers and the role that badgers play in the spread of infection to cattle.
- All stakeholders recognised the need for any badger control measures to be deployed in a targeted way, informed by evidence. They suggested targeting measures in the edge area, where badger-related spread from the high risk area is most likely.

Governance and funding

- There was widespread welcome for increased partnership working, alongside requests for more detail on what this would mean in practice.
- Most stakeholders were supportive of proposals to give farmers and the farming industry more influence and decision-making power over the bTB control programme. There were differences of opinion amongst stakeholders about the extent to which wildlife organisations should be involved in the delivery of the Strategy as a whole.
- Stakeholders asked for more transparency from Defra on how the bTB budget is spent and to what extent the Strategy is driving progress towards the goal of bTB eradication.
- Some stakeholders supported more cost-sharing only on the condition that increased financial contributions go hand-in-hand with more influence and control over the strategic and practical aspects of the programme.
- Stakeholders were broadly supportive of the introduction of local eradication boards. These were seen as useful for linking local implementation with the national programme for eradication, and as vehicles for increasing the influence of those best placed to understand the disease, such as farmers, vets and other professionals who deal with the disease on the ground.
- Questions remained over the geographic scale at which the local eradication boards would operate, who should sit on them and their level of influence over local and national bTB policy and implementation.
- Some stakeholders, particularly farmers, thought that bTB is a shared problem and that members of the public should feel more responsible for reducing bTB, either through the food choices they make or by supporting increased government spending on bTB controls.

Communicating information about bovine TB

- Many stakeholders felt more effective public communication of accurate information about bTB and its controls was necessary. They thought that the public should be made more aware of the extent of the bTB problem and its implications for the livestock industry, the taxpayer and society more widely.
- Stakeholders, particularly farmers, thought it was important for Defra to 'humanise' the strategy, by communicating the work done by farmers to control bTB and the financial and emotional impact of bTB on farmers and other professionals associated with its control. Farmers at the workshops expressed frustration that, as they saw it, the public were not being given all of the information that they needed to understand the issue.

Public workshops

Bovine TB control measures

- Participants supported increased cattle testing and surveillance, primarily because of their concerns about the possible risks of bTB to human health.
- Views were split on whether a compulsory or voluntary approach to on-farm biosecurity would be most effective. There was some concern about the cost to farmers of implementing on-farm biosecurity and a grant scheme was suggested as a way of providing them with support.
- Some participants were concerned that current compensation amounts did not take into account the hidden costs of a bTB outbreak, including the emotional costs. Others argued that compensation was currently too high and would therefore discourage farmers from taking sufficient preventative measures on their farms, or incentivise poor practices.
- A majority of participants supported Defra's proposal to link compensation to on-farm biosecurity, though they questioned the practical implications of this.
- Participants' views on badger culling fell into three broad groups. The first view was that culling badgers is wrong and should not be considered as part of the Strategy. A second view was that all control measures should be used, given the scale of the bTB problem. The third broad view was that culling is an option but the existing evidence is not sufficient to show its effectiveness.
- Participants had mixed views on badger TB vaccination. Some thought that it sounded impractical, while others saw it as an important control measure that should be deployed.
- Participants were surprised at how long it would take for a cattle TB vaccine to become available. Some were frustrated about the European Union (EU) ban on vaccinating cattle against bTB and asked about the EU contribution to solving the problem.

Roles and responsibilities

- Participants in all workshops supported shared responsibility for the bTB control programme. They felt this would address what they saw as inadequate leadership by the government in the past.

- Participants supported government taking a leadership role in the bTB control programme, primarily because they felt that the government's inaction had caused the rise in the incidence of bTB and that the government⁷ should therefore address it.
- Many participants felt farmers and the food industry should take more responsibility for the bTB eradication programme, primarily on the grounds that they would be the prime beneficiaries of its success.
- There was support for wildlife organisations having some responsibilities in the bTB control programme – for example in the deployment of badger vaccine - and taking part in decision-making.
- There was little support for the public taking more responsibility, or contributing more financially, to the bTB control programme.

Communicating bTB to the public

- Participants emphasised the importance of communication being factual, unbiased and apolitical.
- The information that participants thought should be communicated to the public included the epidemiology of bTB; the role played by badgers; the efficacy of available control measures, particularly cattle and badger vaccination and badger culling; the economic impact of bTB on the UK and the cost borne by the taxpayer; and who has responsibility for controlling the disease.

Online engagement

Control measures

- There was general support for the Strategy, because of concerns about the possible impact of bTB on human health and the emotional and economic cost to farmers.
- Participants supported effective cattle surveillance and called for increased frequency and improved accuracy of testing. The emphasis on early detection was driven mainly by a concern about bTB-infected meat getting into the food chain.
- Participants supported cattle vaccination and many were surprised or disappointed that this was not already available. They would like more effort to go towards deploying an effective cattle vaccine, as soon as possible.
- Participants expressed general support for on-farm biosecurity measures aimed at limiting badgers' access to farms, although there were questions about the cost and effectiveness of putting up fences to prevent badgers from accessing farms.
- Participants' views on compensation for farmers were mixed: some felt compensation was fair or could be used as a way of encouraging good biosecurity practice; others felt that compensation payouts contributed to a lack of motivation amongst farmers to improve biosecurity behaviour.

⁷ In line with convention and current style guidance, we use government, with lower case 'g' – see, for example, http://www.ox.ac.uk/public_affairs/services_and_resources/style_guide/capitalisation.html

- Badger TB vaccination received support from those who mentioned it, often explicitly in preference to culling, though participants noted the potential practical difficulties.
- Views on badger culling ranged from total opposition to qualified acceptance. Most comments on badger culling came from participants expressing opposition, discomfort or dislike of this control measure. Some challenged the strength of evidence for the role of badgers in bTB transmission.

Roles and responsibilities

- Participants asked why measures had taken so long to put in place and why England was in a worse position than many other countries. They also expressed concern that the 25-year timescale for the Strategy is too long.
- Some participants supported a joint approach from all stakeholders, including government, farmers and wildlife organisations. Many suggested that government should take the lead or have overall responsibility.
- Several participants raised concerns and questions about the overall cost of bTB and its control, including the cost to the taxpayer.

Utility of the online method

- The online engagement provided valuable insight into public participants' views on bTB and its controls outside of a group setting, as online participants made their contributions in isolation and did not interact with each other.
- The online engagement produced a shallower and less comprehensive dataset than that arising from the public workshops, due to the individual nature of participation. This is because participants focussed only on those aspects which prompted a reaction from them individually, and were not able to build on or learn from each others' arguments and perspectives. There were also a greater number of ambiguous comments as facilitators were not present to encourage participants to elaborate or clarify stated views.
- Although the quantity and quality of contributions differed amongst the online participants, the findings reflect the views of many rather than the detailed comments of a few. Almost all of the 65 participants responded to the majority of questions with short responses (1-2 lines) per question.
- The online approach is deliberative but it cannot be described as dialogic due to the lack of interaction between participants and the minimal interaction between participants and experts.
- However, as an online qualitative research method, Vizzata provided participants with the time and information needed to enable them to deliberate on the topics being addressed and to call for the additional information they need to allow them to deliberate more fully.

Cross-cutting implications

This section relates the findings from the three strands to the project-wide objectives for the dialogue (included in [Appendix 1](#)).

Building a trust relationship

One objective of the dialogue was to develop and appraise opportunities to build a trust relationship between the general public, stakeholders and government in developing policy options for animal disease control. A summary of the main findings relating to this objective is below:

- Across participant groups there was substantial scope to build trust in the government's ability to manage the bTB control programme effectively. This lack of confidence lay behind many of the views expressed during the dialogue, particularly the support for a more collaborative approach.⁸
- Improved communication would be valued by all groups, providing this is considered carefully and tailored effectively to audience needs. Cross-sector discussions such as those in the stakeholder workshops might help to further a partnership approach, particularly in relation to badger control measures.
- Stakeholders suggested that more transparency from Defra about how the bTB budget is spent would encourage the more trusting relationship needed for effective partnership working. Their commitment to an increased financial contribution to bTB control was contingent upon having more power, knowledge and influence.
- Farming industry stakeholders felt they had been misrepresented by the media. They thought that better public communication about the impacts of bTB was needed to address this and increase public trust in the industry.
- Objections to badger culling rested in part on mistrust of the evidence provided by government, or at least a mistrust of the government's interpretation of the wider evidence base. They were also driven by ethical and other concerns which scientific evidence alone will not address.

Informing the development of Defra's draft Strategy

Two objectives of the dialogue were to engage the general public and stakeholders in understanding, deliberating on and contributing to the future strategic development of England's bTB policy and strategy, and to inform Defra's development of a comprehensive bTB eradication strategy.

The following themes are common across all strands of the dialogue:

⁸ It is worth noting that levels of trust in government are generally low. See, for example, IPSOS-Mori research, including <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3188/Perceptions-are-not-reality.aspx>; http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/pdf/eb80_uk_nat.pdf; <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/wellbeing/measuring-national-well-being/governance/art-governance.html#tab=Trust-and-accountability->

- The importance of working towards Officially Bovine TB Free Status for England.
- The need for effective public communication of accurate information about bTB and its controls.
- Increased partnership working to contribute to a more successful Strategy.
- Requests for more clarity about where responsibilities lie for managing bTB.
- Encouraging farmers to adopt on-farm biosecurity measures to reduce risk of bTB infection, though views differed across strands on what this system should be.
- Enhanced surveillance of badgers to understand transmission better.
- Frequent cattle testing as a way to stem the spread of bTB by detecting infection as early as possible and support for increased frequency of testing in the low risk area.
- Enhanced slaughterhouse surveillance.
- Frustration about the length of time before a licensed cattle TB vaccination will be available for use.
- A range of views about the efficacy and appropriateness of culling as part of the bTB Strategy.

Conclusion

The face-to-face dialogue process gave the public an opportunity to learn more about bTB and the complex and multi-stranded approach to managing it, including control measures, costs and governance. One journey they took could be described very broadly as moving from dissatisfaction with the government for having let the problem grow to its current levels, to an acknowledgement that only government is in a position to draw together and balance the interests of all relevant parties in a concerted and strategic programme for eradication.

Stakeholders were very clear that governance arrangements are inadequate and that they need a more powerful voice at the table, particularly if they are asked to provide increased resource. All stakeholders agreed on the need to control the risk of infection from badgers, though there were some strong differences in view about the most appropriate method for doing this.

Appendix 1 Objectives of the dialogue

The overall objectives for the citizen dialogue project were:

- To engage the general public and stakeholders in understanding, deliberating on and contributing to the future strategic development of England's bTB policy and strategy.
- To inform Defra's development of a comprehensive bTB eradication strategy.
- To develop and appraise opportunities to build a trust relationship between the general public, stakeholders, and government in developing policy options for animal disease control.

Tailored objectives were also agreed for each of the strand of the dialogue. The specific objectives of the stakeholder workshops were:

- To hear and understand stakeholder views on Defra's draft Strategy for Achieving "Officially Bovine Tuberculosis-Free" (OTF) Status for England published on 4th July 2013.
- To enable participants to discuss the draft strategy with a range of stakeholders, providing them with an opportunity to hear other perspectives.
- To explore the differences in views and the potential for consensus regarding the best measures to achieve OTF status for England.
- To provide additional qualitative data to complement formal consultation submissions.

The specific objectives for the public workshops were:

- To enable members of the public to deliberate in detail on the measures needed to achieve OTF status for England, including current and potential future measures.
- To understand public views and perspectives on bovine TB, the measures proposed in the draft Strategy, and the social impacts of the proposed measures.
- To enable participants to give input on how the strategy should evolve.
- To explore participants' views on the appropriate roles and responsibilities of the government, industry, and civil society in addressing and eradicating bovine TB, both for cattle and wildlife.
- To enable policy-makers to increase their understanding of public attitudes towards the measures proposed to eradicate bovine TB, and on animal disease control more generally.

The specific objectives for the online engagement were:

- To enable members of the public to deliberate in detail on the measures needed to achieve OTF status for England, including current and potential future measures.
- To understand public views and perspectives on bovine TB, the measures proposed in the draft Strategy, and the social impacts of the proposed measures.
- To enable participants to give input on how the strategy should evolve.

- To enable policy-makers to increase their understanding of public attitudes towards the measures proposed to eradicate bovine TB, and on animal disease control more generally.
- To triangulate the results from the public dialogue workshops
- To trial an online questionnaire tool with deliberative elements