

## APGAW Minutes from Meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2002

1. Chair's welcome to members and today's speaker, Sarah Plumb, from Swansea's HM Customs and Excise.

2. Presentation.

### *The Smuggling of endangered species.*

Unfortunately there are a lot of options available to smugglers these days with the amount of traffic coming into Wales. The UK is actually known as the global centre for the illegal trade in endangered species and the value of this trade runs into billions affecting many species of animals as well as plants. Under the Customs and Excise Management Act, HM Customs and Excise have the power to seize illegally imported goods and also to prosecute people. Offenders can actually receive up to seven years imprisonment for these offences. Apart from organised smugglers there are also individual tourists on holiday who bring back souvenirs and don't even realise they are breaking these laws, for example, a piece of coral or a snakeskin wallet, made from endangered species. It is Custom & Excise's job to enforce the CITES law, which stands for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, it was brought into force in 1975 and there are 160 signatories from different countries around the world. Trade is controlled in about 30,000 species, 25,000 are plants, 800 are actually totally banned. There are three different sections, Appendix 1, 2 and 3. Appendix 1 covers the most endangered. Appendix 2 is the slightly less endangered species, but a permit is needed to bring them in. Appendix 3 is less endangered again, but is constantly monitored and again paperwork is required. When people go through customs control they are checking for these goods and also for the documentation. In Wales 90% of the time people do not have the correct, or any, paperwork.

(Many slides were shown depicting some of the goods and animals seized and the cruelty involved. The cases were then discussed by the group. There was also an exhibition of seized material.)

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3. Questions. Members of the Group asked the speaker questions and there was a brief discussion. A number of key points came to light, like for instance there is a significant number of offenders coming from Wales, even if they are caught at Heathrow etc, Customs and Excise in Wales must carry out searches at their homes. It was felt that the sentences were not sufficient and more importantly, magistrates are not using their powers sufficiently.
4. Wildlife & Environmental Crime Conference Report.  
The Chair attended the conference and reported that it was extremely interesting and useful. A report will be prepared to come to the Group at a future meeting
5. Dates of the next meeting to be circulated as soon as possible.