

Meeting note

16th Meeting of the Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group
Room G21 Nobel House - London
20th March 2015 - 1100-1300

Attendees:

CH Clare Hamilton (Defra)
TP Tara Pelembe (JNCC)
HS Helen Stevens (FCO)
AE Alan Evans (NOC)
CL Chris Lyal (NHM)
EH Eram Qureshi-Hasan (FCO)
SS Simon Smith (FCO)

PN Paul Newbegin (SBAA Cyprus)
NA Nick Andrew-Gauvain (MOD)
NL Natasha Lewis (Defra)

Apologies

DB Dick Beales (DfID)
TW Tony Weighell (JNCC)
CC Colin Clubbe (Kew)
KW Kedell Worboys (UKOTA)
SG Stewart Guy (MOD)
RS Richard Snow (MOD)
VS Vicky Smith (DCMS)

By phone:

SH Stacey Hughes (Defra)
MB Mark Baxter (Defra)

1. Outstanding actions – see action tracker

2. Preparing for new Ministers

- a. *Update on where we are with the strategy document / work on cross-government approach*
Mark Baxter.
- b. *Briefings for new Ministers* **Clare Hamilton**

These two agenda items were considered together. CH gave an overview of the concept highlighting the following:

- The idea is to have cross-government briefings on OT biodiversity prepared for new ministers, so that there are consistent messages across departments.
As an example, Defra has put together a draft focussed on progressing earlier discussions in OTBG meetings i.e. recommending to ministers that the remit and composition of OTBG is widened beyond biodiversity to include wider environmental issues. A draft of this briefing note was presented for discussion

There was agreement that cross-departmental briefings should be prepared and could then be adapted as required by the 'briefing protocol' of each department.

3. Funding

- a. *Update on Darwin Plus* **Clare Hamilton**

CH provided the following update: Darwin Plus normally launches around May, with an application closing date around the beginning of August. Defra will brief new ministers and recommend that the fund continues, however approval will be required from all 3 departments (Defra, FCO and DFID). If ministers approve the continuation of the fund, the call will probably have to be pushed back 2-3 months i.e. likely to be launched in July with a closing date in September.

- b. *Update on BEST* **Simon Smith**

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SS provided an update on the Development Cooperation Instrument for OT funding. €8 million has been earmarked for delivery through the BEST mechanism. Two calls for projects will be issued between summer and autumn of this year and two calls in spring and summer next year. Projects are anything between 100,000 to 250,000 Euros with an implementation period up to 2020

In addition, the Organisation of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is coordinating a climate change adaptation programme that has been running for a year in 3 OTs – Anguilla, BVI and Montserrat.

c. *Update on Biodiversa* – **Natasha Lewis**

NL provided an update on *Biodiversa*. It is a €33 mill funding pot for research. It is likely that UK engagement will happen via JNCC who can provide some input on OTs. Lack of UK funding will however mean that there will be no direct 'pot' of funding for UKOT research, but opportunities will include potential to subcontract research in OTs as part of a wider consortium. A meeting will be held on Monday 23rd March to discuss/finalise the UK position.

CH noted that it would be useful to discuss more broadly how to encourage greater Research Council engagement in relation to the UKOTs, and how OTBG members collectively can encourage the research councils to explore the option of having a specific stream/interest in OTs.

4. Research

a. *Update on GBIF* – **Natasha Lewis**

NL provided an update on the *Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)*. [GBIF](#) is a global biodiversity dataset. The UK has been a member of GBIF for a number of years with a consortium including Defra, JNCC, NHM, NERC and Kew. GBIF makes data available from a range of data sources all around the world – this includes the NHM digitised collections of which 2,741,851 are already on GBIF. Data on GBIF is of value to work undertaken by organisations working on OTs.

b. *Update on OT data access project* – **Tara Pelembe**

TP gave the group a short update on the background to and progress with the UKOT data access project. The concept is that, to avoid duplication, repetition and to provide a comprehensive set of UKOT baseline data, all UK and international organisations make their data available through GBIF. This is accompanied by training sessions and training materials for organisations and individuals on how to download the GBIF data into spatial GIS software so that it can be fed into spatial planning in OTs and into research etc as required.

It would be good if OTBG members encouraged the use of this process, including through requiring this as part of HMG funded projects.

c. *Update on Defra OT research project* – **Natasha Lewis**

NL gave the group a short update on the Defra Gap analysis which was recently commissioned. It is running behind schedule. It is led by CEH and has a consortium of partners including NHM, RSPB and CEFAS. There are 3 milestones: gap analysis; framework; requirements and conclusions. There will be a workshop in April, and preliminary results will feed into the OTTRSG scheduled for July. The Project Steering Committee will meet soon.

It was confirmed that the EQ would be the FCO rep on the Steering Committee.

HB noted that the project would be very useful, and results would have potential implications for Darwin Plus.

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5. Engagement

a. *UK government report on OTBS activities* **Mark Baxter**

MB thanked everyone for their contributions to the OTBS update. Unfortunately feedback from Defra internal review of the document required a different focus i.e. on the links to strategy priorities rather than on a list of what has been done. In light of this, the deadline of publishing before purdah is no longer feasible. It was suggested that the publication be rescheduled to autumn 2015 which will allow for the inclusion of work undertaken under the new government. Defra will revisit the report, re-focus its own sections as required by the reviewers, and then circulate to the wider group to rewrite their sections with a view to an October/November publication date. This could provide a good foundation for the JMC environmental session.

b. *JNCC Stakeholder Group. Update on discussions to date and what is planned* **Tara Pelembe**

TP gave the group a brief update on the progress of the JNCC NGO OT group. The main focus of the group was mapping areas of focus against each other to come up with common areas of priority. To date, c. 8 common areas of priority have been identified. These would then be shared with wider stakeholders at a workshop on the 5th May to which all OTBG members are invited.

CH highlighted that, last year, OTBG held a stakeholder meeting back to back with one of the OTBG meetings where NGOs raised concerns and issues. This had been done with a view to these meetings being annual. OTBG members agreed that this should happen this year.

c. *Meeting with the Dutch Authorities on areas of common interest* **Simon Smith**

SS reported on a bilateral inter-governmental meeting between HMG and the Dutch government, looking at areas for cooperation/collaboration with a focus on the Caribbean OTs. The meeting was professionally moderated, and as such, the range of ideas and opportunities were narrowed to - capacity building; sustainable tourism and waste management the latter providing an opportunity/hook for collaboration on wider environmental issues.

CH noted that the CBD has an initiative on sustainable tourism and is interested in experiences from OTs so this may be interesting to Simon and Dutch colleagues

SS noted that FCO would host a follow up meeting in London perhaps in September to review actions from the initial meeting. These meetings provide a good foundation to consider a trilateral (UK-NL-FR) meeting focussing on environment / biodiversity. Other areas that may be considered include disaster management.

d. *Europe Overseas Roundtable (31 March)* **Clare Hamilton**

CH noted that this was an information point to make everyone aware that IUCN is holding an EU OCT round table meeting on the 31st March in Brussels. CH, SS, EQ and TP would all be in attendance.

e. *UKOTCF Conference, 2015.* **Tara Pelembe**

TP gave a quick update on the OTTRSG meeting that would precede the UKOTCF conference in July.

6. AOB

a. *FERA plant pest id service* **Natasha Lewis**

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NL informed the group that Defra had agreed funding for the Fera OT plant pest id service for the next 2 financial years. A component of the agreement is that Fera are to investigate with Defra and others how to develop into self-sustaining business model in future.

*b. Update on bird killing in the SBAs **Paul Newbegin***

PN gave an update on illegal bird killing in the Cyprus SBAs, in particular in the light of recent press coverage prompted by RSPB and BirdLife Cyprus.

*c. CBD extension to South Georgia **Helen Stevens***

HB informed the group that the UK's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity is in the process of being extended to South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. This should be completed before purdah.

*d. Aichi Targets **Tara Pelembe***

TP flagged up that there are 3 Aichi Targets that have a 2015 deadline, two of which are relevant to the OTs (Target 10: coral reefs and vulnerable ecosystems; and Target 17 (NBSAPs), and it might be useful to flag this up with OTs that have CBD extended to them as the UK will need to report on progress in this regard.

*e. MPAs **Helen Stevens***

HB gave the group an update on the inclusion in the budget of an announcement on the Pitcairn MPA. She advised that the text direct from the budget speech should be reiterated¹.

HB also noted that the Permanent Court of Arbitration has delivered judgement on the legal case regarding the BIOT MPA. Information on this can be found online in the PCA press release (see 'press release and summary of award on this page: http://www.pca-cpa.org/showpage.asp?pag_id=1429).

*f. Ramsar Convention on Wetlands **Clare Hamilton***

CH informed the group that the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands will take place in June. Ramsar is one of the primary mechanisms used by OTs to designate protected areas. The UK delegation to the meeting in June will include representatives from Anguilla.

Date of the next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place towards the end of June.

¹ **2.259 Marine Protected Area (MPA) at Pitcairn** – The government intends to proceed with designation of a MPA around Pitcairn. This will be dependent upon reaching agreement with NGOs on satellite monitoring and with authorities in relevant ports to prevent landing of illegal catch, as well as on identifying a practical naval method of enforcing the MPA at a cost that can be accommodated within existing departmental expenditure limits.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/413945/47881_Budget_2015_PRINT.pdf