



Meeting 2

JNCC-NGO Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Group

2nd July 2014

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<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4079>

JNCC/NGO Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Group

Note of meeting

1 July 2014 14:00-16:30, Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, Westminster, SW1P 3RB

Note

- This is not intended to be a comprehensive minute of the meeting; it is a summary note. It is, however, worded to cover the key points and the contents, especially for the benefit of those partners unable to attend on this occasion.
- In the spirit of collaboration, the points included are not attached to individuals or organisations, except where context or actions make this appropriate.
- The note has not been produced in order of discussion, but rearranged to collate discussion by agenda item and topic.
- There is a general problem in that “UK” is widely used to mean one of two different concepts: (1) Great Britain and Northern Ireland (GBNI); and (2) all UK territory (including GBNI, UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and Crown Dependencies (CDs)). In this document, we try to be clear on meanings, and so use GBNI for (1) and UK for (2), partly to avoid a very long phrase for the latter.

Participants

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation:

Tony Gent

Blue Marine Foundation:

Charles Clover

BugLife:

Vicky Kendemba

Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs:

Clare Hamilton (*from about 4pm*)

IUCN UK National Committee:

Chris Mahon (*via telephone until about 3:30pm*)

Joint Nature Conservation Committee:

Chris Gilligan

Bob Brown

Marcus Yeo

Tony Weighell

Tara Pelembe

Pew Environment Trust and Chagos Conservation Trust:

Alistair Gammell

South Georgia Heritage Trust:

Alison Neil

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds:

Tim Stowe
Clare Stringer

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum:

Mike Pienkowski (in the Chair)
Catherine Wensink

Apologies for absence were received from:

Sarah Brennan, Falklands Conservation; Matthew Gollock & Fiona Llewellyn, Zoological Society London; Kedell Worboys, UK Overseas Territories Association; and individuals from some of the organisations represented by others.

1. Welcome and introductions by Chair

Mike Pienkowski welcomed everyone to the second meeting of this group, having been asked by the NGO members of this group to take the chair for this occasion when it was the NGO turn to chair. He noted that the group had originally envisaged that this meeting would take place in April or May but that JNCC had unfortunately not been able to arrange this. He offered a special welcome, and congratulations, to Professor Chris Gilligan, the new Chair of JNCC.

He recalled the background and purpose of these meetings. All parties recognise the outstanding global importance of the wildlife of the UK Overseas Territories – so that the importance of domestic UK (Great Britain & Northern Ireland, GBNI), although itself high, is put firmly in second place in terms of UK's international responsibilities. However, the resourcing is the reverse of this. In this context, all agree on the importance of pooling resources and expertise between NGOs and governmental bodies to try to address as many of the priority issues as possible.

JNCC had suggested this group meet in response to the recommendation from its first triennial review that JNCC improve engagement with civil society, including with the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. The NGOs, many of which recall a time some years ago of productive joint working and communication on UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies between NGOs and governmental bodies, welcomed this.

The first meeting had agreed that the group should give its initial attention to try to agree strategic priorities for GBNI (including UK Government) support for conservation in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. This is certainly not to determine the priorities for any individual territory. Indeed, where territories have already addressed that, these will provide valuable inputs. However, especially given the fact that urgent needs greatly exceed available resources, all concurred that GBNI bodies (including UK Government) need some agreed priorities to guide as to how to deploy their resources in relation to its shared responsibility for these territories. These resources include funding (such as Darwin Plus), volunteer and other resources from NGOs, expertise, advice and other features. Agreed priorities would not have any formal status, unless individual organisations subsequently agree to give them that; rather they would stand on their merits.

The first meeting had considered the need for such an agreed framework of priorities so high that this topic should be the sole focus of this group until this was achieved. The participants would then consider the continuing need for the group to meet. JNCC had agreed to prepare a document for circulation before the present meeting to provide the basis of the discussion of an agreed framework of priorities. This context provided the basis for the other agenda items in the present meeting: terms of reference for this group, and strategic priorities.

Participants then introduced themselves. As this was the first opportunity for most to meet Professor Chris Gilligan, who had taken over about a month earlier as the Chair of JNCC, Dr Pienkowski

invited him to make some initial comments. Chris noted that he had chaired a number of complex bodies, and including Defra's Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Taskforce. He is a Trustee of the Natural History Museum. His current research is focused on establishing and testing a theoretical framework that identifies the mechanisms that control invasion, persistence, scaling and variability of epidemics within changing agricultural and natural landscapes.

2. Terms of reference for the JNCC/NGO Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Group

JNCC had assembled a set of Terms of Reference for these meetings, taking account of discussions last time, and these were circulated prior to the meeting.

The Group discussed and agreed this, subject to the addressing of the following points [Secretariat Note: a revision of the ToR, incorporating these points, is circulated with this record]:

General: Crown Dependencies (CDs) should be included wherever UK Overseas Territories are mentioned, as well as in the heading.

Objectives: in (1), a "coordinated approach" would be more appropriate rather than "collective approach".

Scope: "related" should be inserted before "socio-economic".

Meetings:

Paragraph 2: at end, for clarity, add: ", alternating with an NGO body."

Paragraph 3: after "in consultation with", replace "JNCC" by "with the Chair of either the previous meeting or the following one". (This and the following point were agreed to restore symmetry so that both the governmental and NGO groupings have advance sight of the papers.)

Paragraph 4: after "Chair", insert "and the Chair of either the previous meeting or the following one".

Paragraph 4: papers should ideally be sent out more than 5 days in advance. (This is especially helpful for those who travel frequently, so that they can prepare for meetings.)

Paragraph 4: add at the end: "Signing-off signifies suitability for discussion, and not necessarily the Chair's agreement with points in the paper."

Communications: the document should note that the group respect the views of the UKOTs and the work is carried out in cooperation and support of them.

Initial areas of work: this section related to decisions taken at the first meeting and is not needed in the Terms of Reference.

Membership: IUCN National Committee UK is a joint governmental and NGO body, not an NGO, and the papers would be amended to reflect this, as well the status of any other organisation.

Other points made included:

Communications: the group noted and welcomed the newsletters produced by JNCC, UKOTCF, SGHT and others which are widely circulated. Any views on appropriate ways additional to these would be welcomed.

Membership: the group felt it was important to be inclusive and this had been stressed at the previous meeting. Therefore, any other NGOs that were missing from the list should be added if those bodies so wish. Some proposed additions were noted: Fauna & Flora International, and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the latter being a government agency.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference were not set in stone and could be revised by agreement when appropriate.

3. Strategic Priorities for conservation support from GBNI-based bodies to the UKOTs/CDs

The first meeting had agreed the importance of developing a framework of priorities for support by GBNI-based bodies (including UK Government) to conservation in UK's territories, and JNCC had offered to prepare a paper to provide the basis for this discussion. JNCC officers had since advised that they had not had the resources to make as much progress on this as they would have liked.

Nevertheless, a paper had been circulated. This consists essentially of three parts:

- The main paper *Strategic Priorities for Future JNCC work*, which outlines JNCC's plans for its own activities in relation to UK Overseas Territories for the next 3 years. JNCC noted that some editing was needed as there were some footnotes missing etc, however, it contained their priorities for the next few years;
- Annex 1, which addresses the *State of Nature Partnership*, which has monitored wildlife in GBNI for some years, and is expanding into UK Overseas Territories;
- Annex 2. This is Appendix 1 of the report of a workshop that UKOTCF organised in June 2011, with wide participation, to try to develop UK objectives re *Biodiversity conservation objectives for UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies*. To aid this, it tried to relate the Aichi Biodiversity Targets to the Environment Charter Commitments and performance assessments, as well as the UK Government's 2009 document *United Kingdom overseas territories biodiversity strategy*. This tabulation is closely related to the group's wish to develop a framework of priorities, and it was included because it might provide a structure for this, based on several existing useful and governmentally agreed documents.

NGOs made several general comments on the JNCC paper. These included:

In the uninhabited territories or those with a very small population, the UK Government operates the government. Therefore, who is the civil society to which this document refers? This means that there is an enormous responsibility for UK Government to do the right thing. UK Government has, for example, defence priorities in these areas. Nature conservation bodies need to be proactive and provide the expertise. Pitcairn, with a small population, requires a lot of support. There are thus problems in applying this document to, for example, British Indian Ocean Territory, Pitcairn, South Georgia & the South Sandwich Islands, Tristan da Cunha, the Cyprus Sovereign Base Areas and Ascension. There is a need to acknowledge that those without a population or those where it is very small need assistance from GBNI, and there is a huge amount of expertise and enthusiasm which lies within the NGO community in the whole UK. Some of these territories are amongst the top in terms of global biodiversity interest.

The paper is a JNCC work-plan and not a precursor to a framework of priorities for UKOTs. There is no explanation of overall goal or overall objectives or how these were chosen. For example, Pitcairn might be the top priority; if so, perhaps all support should go to Pitcairn – but there is no work to find that out. Something is needed to bring everyone together rather than each organisation arbitrarily choosing a project or territory. There is currently a very disjointed approach, and this is a genuine opportunity to work together. The paper indicates what JNCC is planning in the next three years. How do we all use this to move towards a draft strategy? At least a draft would enable identification of a process.

NGOs were working hard to achieve good things, so that it made no sense to operate in isolation. NGOs thought there had been an agreement in the previous meeting to think about how all could build together some kind of overarching “document” that enables us all to consider pooling efforts. Some means of coordinating is needed, in order to focus these. At present, the NGOs do not know whether JNCC is working on appropriate priorities or not. In order to know that, one needs to go back and ask: what are the most pressing problems?; who are best placed to tackle them?; and how can we do that? In GBNI, a biodiversity strategy was agreed some 20 years ago – by a document which initially had no standing but acquired it by agreement. Such a major process is not proposed here but something has to start the process off.

What is the rationale by which a decision is taken to intervene collectively? This seems to be missing from Government thinking. If there is no framework, how do all know government bodies are not wasting tax-payers’ money and NGOs wasting members’ or donors’ money? Would it not be easiest to try and do something together with NGOs?

Some NGO participants felt puzzled about the point of document. It was by no means the basis of a joint document. There was nothing wrong with a strategy but it must contain near-term activities. These were being ignored by JNCC. For example, in Ascension and Pitcairn, there is enormous momentum building for protection of the marine environment.

It would be interesting to know how JNCC sees its relationship with NGOs. How does it wish to work with NGOs and what kind of input does it want?

JNCC commented:

JNCC’s priorities are constrained by resources and so they have concentrated on inhabited territories. They have not been able to work with Pitcairn, not because they exclude it but they just do not have the resources. They have to be selective in their work where they can make the biggest impact. Also, its priorities are often determined by requests from governmental bodies.

JNCC felt that a strategy would take time and would require the full involvement of UK Government. This does not mean that they would sit back and do nothing. JNCC are keen to work more closely with NGOs and to start identifying some shared priorities. For example, the proposed work on biodiversity data would benefit from a collaborative approach and would provide an evidence base that would help to identify priorities for action. It would therefore make an important contribution to the development of a strategy.

JNCC felt that there may be a presentational issue. The priorities concentrate on JNCC work and where they expect to deploy resources over the next couple of years. As part of this, JNCC is looking at what could be done jointly with NGOs and others. JNCC does not have a monopoly of ideas, although some of these are set out in 3.2.

Ways forward

It was noted that the JNCC paper is for JNCC’s work, and JNCC did not feel itself in a position to draft an overall framework of priorities for GBNI bodies to support UKOT/CD conservation without a mandate from UK Government. However, all agreed the desirability of such a framework. The meeting considered how to move towards a wider strategy for UK support for UKOTs and CDs.

It was agreed that JNCC would look at their work-plan for UKOTs/CDs to produce a document indicating where they could use assistance from NGOs. **Action: JNCC**

It was noted that the recent RSPB report, funded by the FCO, began as an extinction-risk assessment. This desk-based study looked at species records that were published or grey literature. Like the earlier UKOTCF study, it revealed the lack of knowledge on a wide variety of taxa and that red-listing is insufficient for many. The information is available as an Excel database. These data will be repatriated to the territories. It is a living resource for use in the future. There are issues and barriers to having good data sets.

JNCC is also managing a FCO-funded pilot project to identify and address barriers to data access in the South Atlantic region.

The meeting noted that the available data are skewed towards dominant taxa and those easy to locate. There are undoubtedly lots of endemics that we do not know about.

In the future work priorities, JNCC indicated that it hoped to work with all UKOTs on a 'OT Biodiversity Data Access' project to establish effective access to UKOT biodiversity data through a JNCC-designed and managed information system.

It was agreed that RSPB and JNCC would expand their discussion meetings on the future steps for the data collation, curation and maintenance to those others who might have data, information or ideas to contribute. The invitation to this would include, but not necessarily be limited to, the members of this group. **Action: RSPB/JNCC**

Participants agreed the importance of trying to fill data-gaps but recognised also that knowledge would always be uneven, for example between taxa and between territories. At the same time, the threats to biodiversity tended to be frequent and major. It was therefore important to identify priorities on the basis of existing knowledge, while trying at the same time to extend that knowledge.

Participants found the table from the UKOTCF 2011 workshop (Annex 2 of the circulated paper) a useful structure by which to classify ideas for priority needs. It had the advantage that it was based on documents signed up to by governments, or initiated in co-operation with them, and brought together their various structures.

It was agreed that all were encouraged to put forward suggestions for possible items to include in the shared priorities. These should be linked to one or more of the targets in Annex 2 (the 20 Aichi targets and the additional 3 to accommodate items from the other documents not readily matched to the 20). Suggestions should indicate concisely the basis of the importance, urgency, current risks (including threats) and opportunities (including policy-based and potential resources), barriers to progress, any links to territory-based priorities or plans, and current progress.

So that full context is gathered, partners should include major initiatives in progress or being planned.

Whilst most shared priorities would probably be looking to cross-territory themes, partners should consider mentioning major issues for single territories if they thought that they might be relevant to other territories also. This should become apparent in the collation and subsequent discussion.

All agreed on the importance of maintaining momentum. UKOTCF agreed to circulate a note about collecting ideas for priorities and then collate the resulting ideas. It noted that the record of the meeting would need to be prepared first, so that partners not attending could be included. UKOTCF hoped to produce the draft record within a week, so that it was agreed that the deadline for submission of ideas would be about 4 weeks from the present meeting. **Action: (1) UKOTCF; (2) All**

Some initial ideas

JNCC's Chair felt that it would be valuable to secure some immediate views on a single high priority from each organisation present. These views would not commit the organisations as regards the ideas that they submitted in relation to the preceding paragraphs. These immediate ideas are summarised below.

Blue Marine Foundation commented on marine protected areas, noting the risk that current opportunities, such as in relation to Ascension and Pitcairn, could be missed if action were not better coordinated. In undertaking these analyses, there should be attempts to identify where it would be appropriate to drop something where there is no current political way it can happen, and celebrate elements known to be good. Such approaches will also enable influencing of the government machine to understand that they are priorities and adopt them. In addition, the rarity of the Natural Environment Research Council addressing UKOT/CD matters, except in relation to the Antarctic, was noted.

UKOTCF's approach is based on partnerships and capacity-building. It would not review here its wide range of member and associate organisations in the territories and current initiatives with them. Instead, it focussed on one current area and noted that, in some territories, there are enormous pressures to do wrong things which could severely damage the territories' future sustainable economies. As a consequence, the terrestrial and marine environment suffers enormously. There is an urgent need to aid strategic planning and controls. UKOTCF is currently exploring some work looking at what other routes can be taken. This depends largely on making those whose livelihood depends on a healthy environment aware of this, so that they become champions both amongst their peers and to the supposed regulatory authority. Such stakeholders include fishermen, resorts benefitting from their surroundings, related tourism businesses and many others. There has been some successful exploratory work in this area.

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust recognises that at present, data are lacking in its area. Little is known about what is there and the reasons for this. As a framework, ARC is keen to look at outcomes on higher levels. There is a need to understand what is feasible and what would be the political outcome so that it can be seen how to influence those. In terms of the biological sites, habitat mapping and species, assessments need to be carried out with GIS survey.

RSPB has a programme of work, which includes long-term strategic partnerships with Tristan da Cunha, Montserrat, St Helena and Ascension. As these territories have very low levels of resources, they are areas where it is possible to have a large impact, boosting local capacity to conserve their environment. More work is being carried out in the Cayman Islands because of risk of extinctions. The overall aim of the organisation is value of birds, yet there is a move towards more nature and impending threat. Over the next 10 years, a realistic aim is to achieve total eradication of mice on Gough and good management of marine resources on Ascension. In terms of species conservation, RSPB has a way of diagnosing problem and management methodology, which is then rolled out. This has worked well in Montserrat with the oriole (although the threat level had been reduced slightly with the inactivity of the volcano) and the wirebird on St Helena. As far as habitat conservation work, this is less developed. They are looking also at land purchase to ease development pressures. One example, where too much reliance is being placed on opportunistic data collection and information gathering is in Pitcairn, where four plants which were endemic were found in a chance discovery by a field researcher. If such an approach continues, more species extinctions are likely.

BugLife began a programme of work on St Helena as this was the most species-rich, and so the most obvious, place to start. With invertebrates, the key issue is the data-gaps. So far, 448 endemic invertebrate species have been recorded. Building on the RSPB report and its gaps, we can add in issues and key habitats giving a more complete picture on UKOTs. Filling of data gaps and knowledge and how is to resource this is the next stage which they are currently exploring.

The *South Georgia Heritage Trust* is currently focussing on eradication of rats on South Georgia. This has included some collaboration with partners and is a good model on how this can be done in other UKOTs. As glacial retreat continues, barriers to the rats are removed and so even more birds are under threat. The Trust has raised funds and has now cleared 2/3 of the island. They are now in a situation where they are the victims of their own success as they need to raise a further £2million to finish the work. There is no point doing in the exercise if they do not rid the island of all rats. They have not yet begun to move in to other urgent matters such as marine environment, for example, the krill fisheries.

The *Pew Environment Trust* manages their Worlds Oceans Programme. It is focussed on protection of large areas of ocean as no-take zones. This comes down to politics, not science. This is possible only politically where there is little use. It is not possible around GBNI or other areas of Europe. Particularly in those territories that are less populated or unpopulated, sites are massive. The UK currently had one of the largest MPAs in the world and should be celebrating this. The FCO need help with this from the NGO community.

More information on UKOTs' biodiversity is needed. The status of knowledge in the UKOTs should be equal to that of GBNI's biodiversity. Then there can be an understanding of the long-term needs and what are the real emergencies. A biodiversity audit is needed. In the short term, emergency measures are needed. If no one is doing it, then someone should.

JNCC's Committee will shortly be reviewing its long-term strategy, including for its work on UKOTs. The priorities in terms of JNCC support for UKOTs will be mixed. It is not going to be practical work, although staff from JNCC have assisted on conservation projects directly in their free time. JNCC priorities will be more focused on developing tools and knowledge to enable UKOTs to identify priorities and monitor the effectiveness of policies. JNCC recognises the importance of working with the NGO community. In the UK, it works primarily with FCO and Defra. Its disposable income for UKOTs is £75k per year, in addition to what it receives through additional grants, such as via the Darwin Initiative. JNCC considers that it is not able to criticise or lobby governments and tries to maintain relationships with all UKOT governments. JNCC's overall priority is to build capacity so that UKOT governments are less dependent on outside experts, considering that this differed from the NGO's role. JNCC has tried to do this through various workshops including for sample, GIS capacity. JNCC thinks that this training for government departments is an important part of ensuring that senior politicians have the tools to have an impact on what is going on. JNCC is keen that NGOs understand the limitations and constraints on JNCC.

NGOs considered that JNCC may have made some incorrect assumptions about what NGOs were doing and the state of relations between UKOTs and NGOs, but were keen to continue cooperation and to correct what they considered were misunderstandings by JNCC. NGOs noted that most funding and other resourcing for conservation in UKOTs in the last 5 years has come from outside foundations. However, they noted that it is valuable to be informed of JNCC's viewpoint.

Defra indicated that it would be bringing together governmental bodies to think about UKOTs and be a bit more strategic in their approach. They are keen that JNCC is involved in this. Defra appreciated that the present group want to maintain the momentum of the matters discussed, but noted that some time would be needed to connect all these together. Defra anticipated having some outputs from its governmental meetings before the end of the year.

The meeting agreed that this was an important point, but that it would be appropriate for these various meeting streams to move in parallel so that we can jointly move forward most efficiently. Exchanging ideas when appropriate was seen as crucial. The approaches were seen to be potentially complementary. There remained a question of how to bolt these together, which is what the NGOs want.

4. Next steps and any other business

The group felt that the next meeting should be held in time to feed into the governmental process. In terms of other commitments, this meant either the first half of September or from November. The meeting decided to meet in the first half of September. UKOTCF agreed to canvass dates.

Action: (1) UKOTCF; (2) All

Defra would consider how best to feed in the outputs from the present group into the governmental process and also generate feedback. **Action: Defra**

In response to a question about when the next workshop conference in the series so highly valued by conservation practitioners in the territories would be held, UKOTCF recalled that it had previously held these every three years until 2009. After this, UK Government financial support to match the resourcing which UKOTCF had secured from elsewhere had no longer been available. The Government of Gibraltar was hoping to support UKOTCF in arranging a conference there in 2015, but this was subject to Gibraltar's budget debate (taking place in the current week) and subsequent analysis. Whilst the Government of Gibraltar's contribution would be unlikely to cover the whole cost, without that contribution, it would not be practicable to hold a conference in 2015. News was expected soon. UKOTCF took the opportunity to credit a grant from Defra which had helped cover the planning costs incurred in the 2013-14 financial year. UKOTCF noted that it was exploring with various partners, including JNCC, the possibility of holding various other planned meetings back-to-back with the possible conference so as to share travel costs. Defra indicated that it is examining other opportunities to share travel costs also. UKOTCF noted that it had been active on various aspects of conference planning, pending the decision as to whether finances would allow the conference to proceed. This included of dates to fit in shipping schedules from St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and Pitcairn. As a consequence, the expected period for a conference would be in the latter half of July 2015.

Summary of Action Points:

1. It was agreed that JNCC would look at their work-plan for UKOTs/CDs to produce a document indicating where they could use assistance from NGOs. **Action: JNCC** (page 5)
2. It was agreed that RSPB and JNCC would expand their discussion meetings on the future steps for the data collation, curation and maintenance to those others who might have data, information or ideas to contribute. The invitation to this would include, but not necessarily be limited to, the members of this group. **Action: RSPB/JNCC** (page 6)
3. All agreed on the importance of maintaining momentum. UKOTCF agreed to circulate a note about collecting ideas for priorities and then collate the resulting ideas. It noted that the record of the meeting would need to be prepared first, so that partners not attending could be included. UKOTCF hoped to produce the draft record within a week, so that it was agreed that the deadline for submission of ideas would be about 4 weeks from the present meeting. **Action: (1) UKOTCF; (2) All** (page 6)
4. The meeting decided to meet in the first half of September. UKOTCF agreed to canvass dates. **Action: (1) UKOTCF; (2) All** (page 8)
5. Defra would consider how best to feed in the outputs from the present group into the governmental process and also generate feedback. **Action: Defra** (page 8)