

13th Meeting of the Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group
Room 106 Nobel House - London
13th May 2013, 1330-1530

Attendees:

CH Clare Hamilton (Defra)
TP Tara Pelembe (JNCC)
NA Nicolas Andrews-Gauvain (MOD)
HS Helen Stevens (FCO)
RF Richard Findon (Defra)
SA Steve Ashby (Defra)
MB Mark Baxter (Defra)
CHM Colin Hindmarch (NetBiome-CSA) (for agenda item 7)
JP Janice Panton (UKOTA)
NC Nicola Clarke (Defra)

By phone:

SR Sugoto Roy (AHVLA), York
AS Andy Stott (Defra)

Apologies

TW Tony Weighell (JNCC)
KW Kedell Worboys (UKOTA)
RL Razi Latif (DfID) – by phone
CC Colin Clubbe (Kew)
SC Sally Cunningham (Defra)
SG Siôn Griffiths (FCO)
SH Stacey Hughes (Defra)
DF Darren Freezor (DECC)

1. Environment Audit Committee – update on where we are – Clare Hamilton

CH gave the group a brief update on events and activities related to the 2012 Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into sustainability in the UKOTs¹. HMG's response to EAC report was submitted on 14th March. A Westminster Hall debate² on the report took place on 8th May. Defra Minister George Eustice represented HMG.

2. Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy (OTBS) follow up document – update on where we are – Clare Hamilton

- The OTBS follow up document was published on 12th May on [.GOV³](#), to coincide with the APPG on Biodiversity's meeting on Overseas Territories, which was attended by Defra Minister Lord de Mauley, FCO Minister Mark Simmonds and Minister Gawne from the Isle of Man.
- SR updated the group on the work that AVHLA does in the OTs. Their focus is wildlife management and projects include:
 - an ongoing feral livestock culling and monitoring programme in Montserrat;
 - BEST-funded goat eradication in an offshore island in BVI (in collaboration with RSPB): training in wildlife management on airfields (hosted on Tortola BVI);
 - And a 4-year Gull-culling programme on Gibraltar

¹ <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environmental-audit-committee/inquiries/parliament-2010/sustainability-in-the-united-kingdom-overseas-territories/>

² <http://services.parliament.uk/calendar/#!/calendar/Commons/WestminsterHall/2014/5/8/events.html>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-overseas-territories-biodiversity-strategy-update>

3. Cross-government working on OTs (paper from Clare Hamilton)

- There was general discussion around the paper, which suggested a wider-government, more strategic, long term approach to HMG support for environment in the UKOTs.
- **The detail** around which policy document provided the best framework (e.g. white paper, JMC communiqué, OTBS etc) was discussed. The gaps around environmental issues such as waste, water and fisheries management were acknowledged, as was the constitutional context for any initiatives.
- However, **the principle** of the paper was agreed by the group. This was seen as a means by which HMG can become more proactive rather than reactive; better placed to support access to EU and other larger funding sources.
- It was recommended that **the process** for the development of this approach included getting a better understanding of what current cross-Whitehall input is,
 - Sharing with OTs through UKOTA when there is a more coherent concept/proposal
 - 2-yearly face-to-face consultations with OTs
- Additional points made to include in the development of the concept were:
 - Role of and opportunities for cross-territory working
 - Links within and between different teams in Defra.

4. OTBG ToR (paper from Clare Hamilton)

- The paper proposed an expansion of the TORs to include a wider environmental remit, and a wider cross-government membership. The principle was agreed by the group

5. Stakeholder meeting – update by Clare Hamilton

- The agenda for the Stakeholder meeting to follow was discussed.

6. Europe Overseas Conference – UK engagement

- Background to the October Europe Overseas Conference⁴ was given to the group. The event is scheduled to be held from the 22-25th October 2015 in Guadeloupe. The group raised concerns around the timing (immediately after CBD CoP); content (currently unconfirmed) and organisation of the event which made it difficult to decide on the level and nature of UK input into the event. It is important that more detail and information is sought as soon as possible so that a decision can be made.

7. NetBiome – presentation from Colin Hindmarch and Q&A (note this agenda item was presented first)

- Colin Hindmarch attended this section of the meeting to update the group on NetBiome and outline highlights and opportunities. A summary of his talk is provided in the attached pdf. The only OT to be part of/benefit directly from the Net Biome project is Montserrat

8. BEST, LIFE and Biodiversa3

⁴ http://iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/europe/activities/overseas/overseas_events.cfm

- AS gave the group an update on the status of the **Biodiversa project** (which sits under the Horizon 2020 research programme) – UK (Defra, Nerc and JNCC) have put themselves forward as potential members of a consortium to undertake this joint project which can potentially result in a major research call of c. £33 million Euros. A bid has been submitted, and the outcomes will be known by the end of the year.
- RF gave the group an update on **Life**. There were a series of events with the Commission in March 2014 – which included a logframe training workshop and a workshop to talk through possible UKOT project concepts. The interpretation of ‘article 6’ of the life decision is fairly restrictive and action in the OTs can only be funded if it is necessary to delivery conservation actions and objectives in the EU. The only UKOT project concept that was submitted to the National Focal Point after this advice is a regional Caribbean Lionfish project.
 - Other possible ideas for principles for projects (e.g. management of fruit fly) were discussed.
- SG was not available to provide **BEST update**. HS will send through an update and circulate to the group.

9. AOB

SA raised the question of how to get UKOTs to become members of the IPPC?