



Meeting 3

JNCC-NGO Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Group

12th September 2014

To find more about JNCC's OT and CD programme visit:
<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=4079>

COVER NOTE

Paper 1: UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Data Access Project

Type of Paper: Discussion.

This paper explores some of the ideas emerging from the development of a concept for a UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Data access project.

It includes consideration of the potential opportunity this presents to use the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) to provide the platform for sharing OT data internationally.

The discussion of the potential GBIF role will also be presented to the 11th GBIF conference to be held in India in October 2014 in a presentation entitled: **UK Overseas Territories Data access and Management – an emerging role for GBIF?**

The paper has been developed through discussions with RSPB and the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI) who both provide case studies that feed into the project concept.

The concept is still very much in draft form. This paper provides a framework for discussion where feedback, thoughts and ideas on any component of the concept would be welcome.

OT Biodiversity Data Access Project Concept

The UK has 14 Overseas Territories (OTs) which are scattered across the globe from Antarctica to the Pacific Ocean. Although most of the OTs are islands, their size, latitude, biogeography, population and economies vary significantly. The inhabited OTs have populations that range from below 100 (Pitcairn) to above 60,000 (Bermuda). This diversity creates both opportunities and challenges.

Background and Policy drivers – UK

The UK Government's 2012 Overseas Territories White Paper 'Security, Success and Sustainability' set out that Territory Governments are constitutionally responsible for conserving biodiversity and for developing appropriate, applicable and affordable environmental policies, legislation and standards, with the UK Government providing technical advice and expertise to enable the Territories to meet their environmental obligations.¹

It is widely recognised that lack of data and/or lack of access to data is a challenge and one of the five strategic priorities for the UK Government's support for biodiversity conservation in the Overseas Territories set out in the UK's Overseas Territories Biodiversity strategy (UKOTBS) is focussed on data i.e. *obtaining data on the location and status of biodiversity interests and the human activities affecting biodiversity to inform the preparation of policies and management plans (including baseline survey and subsequent monitoring).*

OT context:

Data gaps, data management and/or access to data have been identified by OT personnel as an issue that needs to be addressed. Recent examples of where this has been highlighted include:

- In the 2013 review of progress on the implementation of the UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy, individual territories highlighted their specific data management/access requirements this included data availability and access ².
- In the 2013 Falkland Islands environmental Mainstreaming report, one of the key conclusions identified data, and data access as a high priority action ³ i.e. *obtain key baseline data on the environment (e.g. on where ecosystems / habitats are, and what ecosystem services they provide);*
- In the 2014 OT Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meeting held at Kew in London, management of data was seen as a key requirement

¹ United Kingdom Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy 2009:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/69204/pb13335-uk-ot-strat-091201.pdf.

² http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/ot_Kew14threportFinalpdf.pdf pg 22-24

³ http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/ot_FalklandIslands_EnvironmentalMainstreamingProject.pdf

- In the 2014 South Atlantic Overseas Territories Regional Workshop held on Ascension Island, having well-managed data in a system that was sustainable over a long period of time was a key message.

What is already in place:

There are a number of initiatives that have been implemented at either a territory level, or a cross territory level that attempt to collect, collate and manage biodiversity data. Some of these work efficiently and effectively, some face challenges, and others are still to be initiated. However, there is no common approach to data access and no holistic platform for data share. This presents a potential opportunity for the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)⁴.

- **Territory based systems:** Data management systems have been effectively set up in a number of overseas territories a brief overview of some of these is outlined in Annex 1 (note this is not a comprehensive list)
- **Regional systems:** CASE STUDY: The South Atlantic Overseas Territories (SAOT) Regional Information Management Centre (IMC) is a pilot project that is attempting to identify and address barriers to data access in the South Atlantic Region. This includes training and capacity building, staffing, establishing data management protocols, research permits, purchasing hardware and software, etc⁵. It is FCO-funded, JNCC-managed and implemented by the South Atlantic Environmental Research Institute (SAERI)
- **Cross territory systems:** UK organisations have set up systems to manage cross territory data:
 - British Antarctic Survey – manages data for South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the British Antarctic Territory.
 - Royal Botanical Gardens Kew uses its in-house Brahm's database to manage Overseas Territories Plant data⁶.
 - CASE STUDY: A recent project funded by the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and implemented by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)⁷ attempted to compile species lists for most of the UK's OTs. Data was collected through a variety of methodologies including desk-based web research; individual contacts with OT governments, local bodies and international bodies, this approach accessed more than 600 published papers and reports and made personal contact with over 100 individuals. After initial species records were compiled for each island OT, they were made available to relevant experts for review.

⁴ <http://www.gbif.org/>

⁵ <http://www.south-atlantic-research.org/>

⁶ <http://www.kew.org/science-conservation/research-data/science-directory/teams/uk-overseas-territories>

⁷ The UK's wildlife overseas a stocktake of nature in our overseas territories.
http://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/ukots-stocktake_tcm9-369597.pdf

The final output is a 'stocktake' i.e. a combined list of species for the UK OTs which is then available for analysis. It is understood that the list is incomplete and that there are potentially some substantial datasets that were not found, synonymy errors etc, however the stocktake provides a foundation and platform upon which other work can be built.

- Lessons learnt from the project included the requirement to consider both data repatriation and opportunities for sharing the data internationally at the start-up stages of the project.
- The project's next steps will attempt to address these requirements, and it is in this context that the role that GBIF can play in providing the platform/mechanism for international access to this newly developed dataset is currently being explored.

Do we need an overarching data management/access strategy?

It could be argued that a data access project of this nature should sit as an implementation plan under the umbrella of a data access/management strategy. There are however a number of complexities and sensitivities in developing a cross- overseas territories strategy. The idea was floated at in the February 2014 Overseas Territories Training and Research Steering Group meeting (where there are government representatives from all of the OTs and CDs) and it was agreed that at this stage a cross-OT strategy would not be required/useful at this stage⁸.

Basic principles

Although there is no overarching strategy, outlining basic principles might be a good foundation for common understanding. The detail of what should be included in these principles is still to be decided.

Project Aim

This project's (draft) aim is to consider the options and opportunities for improved access to OT 'core' biodiversity data by working with OTs and other international (including UK) organisations to identify and address barriers to access where they exist.

The project is being developed with the understanding that a number of OT's having existing well-established data management and access systems.

Project Process

The development of this project requires consultation with a range of stakeholders and is likely to consider number of options.

JNCC will consult other Overseas Territories, UK and international organisations to get an understanding of their data management systems, processes and barriers to access between October 2014 and June 2015. The approach taken will be a regional one and will include:

- *For the South Atlantic:*

⁸ http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/20140226_OTCDTRSG%20meeting%20note.pdf

- Participating in quarterly SAOT IMC Steering group meeting to input into and monitor the progress and development of this pilot project.
- Through the (above) group developing a Darwin Plus project to submit in 2015.
- *For the UK:*
 - Organising a workshop/meeting to consult UK organisations in early 2015.
 - Meeting with RSPB data staff to consider options for the future of the data associated with their recent *Stocktake of nature in our Overseas Territoriesⁱ*.
- *For the Caribbean:*
 - A day-long workshop to consult Caribbean OTs on the status of data access in their OT in January/Feb 2015.
 - Establishing whether a Darwin Plus project is required to address barriers/gaps – if so, prepare one for submission in 2015.
- For the other inhabited OTs and OTs with not current resident population:
 - British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT): scientific advisory group
 - British Antarctic Territory (BAT): British Antarctic Survey
 - Gibraltar: Gibraltar Government and Gohns
 - Sovereign Base Areas (SBA) Cyprus: SBA Cyprus Administration and Ministry of Defence (MOD).
 - Pitcairn: Tbc.
- *Cross OT:* Presentations on the project concept will be given to:
 - The UK Overseas Territories Association (UKOTA)
 - The Overseas Territories Biodiversity group (OTBG)
 - The Overseas Territories Training and Research Steering Group (OTTRSG) – September 2014
- These consultations will focus on:
 - The project background and context
 - An audit of what currently exists with regard to data management systems and access.
 - Discussion on main barriers and how to address them
 - Discussion on how to make the 'core' data more widely available

Project topic focus

- The initial thinking is that, to provide some parameters, this project will focus on access to baseline biodiversity and management data:
 - **Biodiversity:**
 - **Species:** name, location and status
 - **Habitats:** name, location and status
 - **Spatial management** and status: Boundaries for Protected Areas, green spaces etc.
 - **Legislative/Policy Framework**
 - Environmental legislation and Policy and Plan Inventory
 - Environmental actions.

- **NOTE:** This focus might change/develop after consultations.
- And focus on options for **access to data** at 3 levels:
 - Access **within the territory**
 - Access **cross territory/regionally**
 - Access **globally**.
- When considering the options, the possibility of a single system addressing access at all 3 levels will not be ruled out.
- GBIF will be explored as the mechanism for making OT biodiversity data globally available with OT data centres becoming GBIF nodes.

The project will not identify or address data gaps, but will focus solely on access to data that already exists.

Project management

- The project will be managed by JNCC. A Steering Group with key stakeholders/technical experts will be established to steer the direction, focus and development of the project.

Next steps

- As outlined in the attached timetable, initial consultations will begin with stakeholders where the project concept will be further developed and refined.

Annex 1 Territory-based Geographical Information systems currently in place

OT/CD Government	GIS information:
Anguilla	Have a GIS system with aerial photography, satellite data, ecological data, habitat mapping and classification (terrestrial). Working on marine habitat mapping, commercial fisheries and landsat imagery to measure coastal change over time.
Ascension Island	Have a GIS system and have made the switch to QGIS. Have had technical input from Illaria (SAERI) and Katie Medclaf.
Cayman Islands	tbc
Falkland Islands	GIS system being developed in collaboration with SAERI – technical input from Illaria. QGIS training will be carried out on island in the near future.
Isle of Man	Working with technical input from Katie Medclaf to update habitat maps using low cost alternatives
Jersey	A variety of data sets and formats. Important to set data protocols early.
Guernsey	GIS manager on each OT/CD would be good.
St. Helena	Central spatial system important.
South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands	GIS system set up – Jennifer will circulate link .
Tristan da Cunha	No GIS for Tristan yet.