



Meeting 4

JNCC-NGO Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Group

15th December 2015

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

JNCC/NGO Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Group Note of 4th Meeting

2pm on 15th December 2014, at Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, Westminster, SW1P 3RB

Note

- A summary of action points is included at the end.
- 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 ‘topic’ and by agenda item.
- 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:

Tom Appleby

Falklands Conservation:

Dave Spivack¹

IUCN UK National Committee:

Chris Mahon

Joint Nature Conservation Committee:

Chris Gilligan

Paul Rose

Tara Pelembe

Marine Conservation Society:

Peter Richardson

Pew Environment Trust and Chagos Conservation Trust:

Alistair Gammell

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds:

Tim Stowe (in the Chair)

James Millet

UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum:

Mike Pienkowski

Catherine Wensink²

Sarah Barnsley

¹ Full-time from February 2015

² Catherine and Sarah had agreed, with RSPB & UKOTCF approval, to take the notes of the meeting

Apologies:

Vicky Kindemba, Buglife; Matthew Gollock & Fiona Llewellyn, Zoological Society London; FFI; and individuals (including Marcus Yeo, JNCC) from some of the organisations represented by others.

1. Welcome and Introduction by Chair (Tim Stowe, RSPB)

Tim Stowe welcomed everyone to the fourth meeting of this group, having been asked by the NGO members of this group to take the chair for this occasion, it being the NGO turn.

He recalled the background and purpose of these meetings and expressed the collective wish to focus on the development of strategic priorities for GBNI support for conservation in UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies. It was certainly not for the group to determine the priorities for any individual territory but to make best use of the resources in the UK and to avoid duplication of effort and pooling of resources and expertise.

It was agreed to take item 2 and 3 simultaneously.

2. & 3. JNCC to report on consultations and supply spreadsheet mapping targets and a discussion of priorities

JNCC referred to Paper 22 [which should be Paper 2014/24, with its spreadsheet Paper 2014/25], which updates progress since the previous meeting on populating the spreadsheet presented then by UKOTCF (Paper 2014/14, labelled as Paper 3 for 3rd meeting). They had been tasked with collating information from various governmental institutions involved in UKOTs (e.g. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew), in order to complement the UKOTCF's collation from NGOs (but to which governmental bodies had not contributed), in order to help find common ground and priorities. This had not been easy. Firstly, few responses were received (Exeter University had responded). Second, the information supplied by many organisations had been at different levels of detail. With regards to point 3.3 on Paper 22, discussions with Ascension and the Falklands were ongoing. Ascension was currently developing its Biodiversity Action Plan and, as part of this, was looking at web-based models for managing actions. A similar structure for Ascension and Falklands was being explored.

JNCC pointed out that data access sharing and analysis was a frequently expressed priority that the forum had already started to work on.

JNCC acknowledged that the spreadsheet was not particularly user-friendly at present, but it could be used to stimulate discussion on how to move forward. They expressed a wish to include information from UKOTs also.

The following general comments by the NGOs were made:

In order to test the detail of the information in the spreadsheet, one NGO had looked at target 11 in detail. The gaps in information had been striking. It ignored the Chagos marine protected area (the largest in the world), Bermuda, South Georgia, and Pitcairn or organisations such as Warwick University (who manage information for the Chagos Islands), Chagos Conservation Trust, Pew or ZSL. This led to questions about the process of data collection as it lacked a lot of detail.

UKOTCF noted that, in gathering inputs for the initial version (Paper 2014/14; labelled as Paper 3 for the 3rd meeting), most of the bodies just mentioned and all bodies on the circulation list for this Group had been invited to contribute, but many had not done so. It had not been the job of the original collators to identify the gaps but merely to encourage responses and document in the agreed framework the information received. Those organisations which had responded to the original enquiry had chosen to do so at various levels, but this was not a major problem. UKOTCF noted that the large

table had been a means of gathering the initial data into a structure that allowed a comparison of the views of those participating. However, it had not been envisaged that the large table (now copied and extended into a spreadsheet by JNCC) would be used as an operational tool, except to allow any further information to be collated. It was disappointing that very few institutions had contributed in the second attempt, this time by JNCC, to secure responses from governmental bodies, and additionally there was a great temptation to record where we have been and not where we are going. It may be that the DEFRA tendered project to fill gaps (see Agenda Item 4) will eventually assist this process. To start moving towards a manageable list of areas of common priorities, UKOTCF had reported, in its presentation of the paper to the third meeting, a first list of 12 main areas identified by various combinations of the partners. These are recorded on pages 3-4 of the Note of 3rd meeting held on 12th September 2014 (Paper 2014/18).

It was agreed that it is helpful that the spreadsheet, and table that it had been based on, had been based on the Aichi targets as this was internationally accepted and was likely to remain current for some time. It was acknowledged that this was a difficult exercise and gaps were understandable. At this stage, the group needed to address how to use the group as a way to develop the framework further and identify the strategic priorities.

There were comments that organisations are not organized into what Aichi target they are addressing; organisations are organised geographically and they are interested in different areas and at different levels of involvement. For example, if seeking Falklands data, the Falklands Conservation should be asked to supply information they have. It was agreed, however, that the purpose of this group was not to consider matters within territories, as this was the role of the territories themselves. This group was intended to develop approaches to inform how resources from GBNI could best be applied across territories.

NGOs and JNCC agreed that the Aichi Targets are the minimum international targets that the UK should be meeting. JNCC has been party to the development of the targets. The suite became robust towards the final stages as delegates could not suggest something that did not fit in to one or several of the targets. NGOs agreed that suggestions that issues did not fit easily within the targets had been intended to mean that some issues were so broad that they spread over most or all targets.

There is a need to make sure that the spreadsheet is as complete as possible, and this comes down to joint ownership of the document. It was noted also that ecosystem services were not really mentioned specifically, but they are a good way of drilling out priorities and in gaining acceptance where there is a local population. More could be made of this point. For example, species often have other cultural services attached to them. It was recognised that neither the document's originator (UKOTCF) nor the one (JNCC) which had tried to expand it could themselves provide the information on behalf of those which did not respond. All bodies should be providing their inputs.

JNCC felt that the comments had reflected the complexity of situation within which we are working. There are 14 UKOTs (or 16, depending on whom one asks), with many different organisations working at different levels. We need to think about where we are trying to get to and how we adapt this process to get there. JNCC expressed doubts that the best way is to keep adding to the spreadsheet. Some UKOTs have set out their own priorities and have developed plans of how they will meet them. The group is trying to look for partnerships and joint ways of working. They are aware that there are gaps and lack of completeness. Many organisations do not have priorities for their work on UKOTs which could be directly transposed on to the spreadsheet. However, JNCC and others emphasised the strategic importance of the spreadsheet, echoing the need to include ecosystem services in the responses (as some had done in the earlier version in UKOTCF's paper for the 3rd meeting).

NGOs noted that the large areas of Aichi targets where HMG had apparently made no comment at all in respect to UKOTs/CDs is itself of interest as to how HMG regards its commitments.

There are several ways in which this information could be stored and held. However, it was agreed that the spreadsheet sheds more light than darkness, it is useable and it should be populated further. If it is useful, it will have a life of its own and it would be a shame to abandon it at an early stage. Conversely, attempts to complete the table should not divert attention from moving forward on the basis of the overview that it already provides. It was agreed that the UKOTCF/JNCC table would remain available to collate further information as bodies provided it. Equally, it was agreed that we should not be closed to other ways of inputting.

NGOs asked where are we trying to get to and how do we do that? JNCC were keeping an open mind on how to find common ground and begin to prioritise.

The question was raised as to whether strategic priorities are the same as opportunities to work together to deliver some of them? These may not be the same in all cases. One organisation recalled that, in the 2nd meeting, one of the things we were doing was looking for synergies, to bring about more than what JNCC were doing themselves, the purpose of which was to see where partnerships could be created.

Several NGOs thought that the concept of the meeting was to try to avoid situations where NGOs fell out with JNCC because they took a different view, and to try to identify where bodies together could come together in common voice and add value to something.

Overall, it seemed that there were several things that we are trying to identify where we can come together and add value to achieve something that would otherwise not be achieved. These include: areas where the work of JNCC would benefit from the help of others; areas where there is potential cooperation between different organisations more generally; and areas where work is needed but has not been started or is early in development.

JNCC wondered whether the exercise should be conducted at topic or project level. One NGO said it would be difficult to undertake the exercise at a project level. This would be both over-detailed and in danger of treading on toes of territories rather than helping. If we are putting themes together and agreeing priorities for GBNI-based resources, it would need to be at a higher level than projects. JNCC felt that this depends how one defines a project, as the data access project is a good example of this. Initially, considerations would be kept at a level higher than project. If that achieved a common ground, then we can proceed to a lower level, if appropriate. NGOs agreed that data-access is really a programme-level topic potentially incorporating a number of projects.

One NGO said that we know species are under threat and ecosystems are being degraded, but we need to keep a broad perspective. The detail of projects and specifics will naturally populate an implementation plan at some point. The spreadsheet is something to come back to when we have an outline plan to make it easier to see where resources should be deployed.

It was noted also that we need to find out what the political priorities and opportunities are within the conservation-driven priorities identified.

One NGO felt that funding was such a fundamental obstacle to achieving anything that it should be a separate priority item itself. It noted that killing some invasive species is tough and requires huge sums of money and multiple partners. Unless the size of the funding available for UKOTs is increased, and the NGOs have common ground with the government, everyone is in trouble and so ultimately is the environment. JNCC felt there were things that it could do (such as the Natural Capital Workshops) but it could not directly pressure UK Government for more funds. Most agreed that this group might not be appropriate for calling for more funding as one of the separate points, because JNCC, as a government agency, could hardly be a party to lobbying government for increased funding. Most bodies agreed that each priority area should be ready to consider the funding required to fulfil the needs. However, informing government of this point was best done by the different means appropriate to an agency or NGOs. Having overall agreement on the priority needs would support these. It could, however, be appropriate to include a wider range of resourcing issues under “resource mobilisation.”

Amongst other points made were:

- Excellent projects are not being implemented simply due to a lack of funding.
- There are 4 main UK ministries involved.
- What significant contribution can GBNI organisations bring to UKOTs?
- Inhabited UKOTs have their own governments and civil societies. The process should be mindful of UKOT priorities. UKOTCF's original tabulation had indeed been based partly on consultations with them. The exercise is not intended to impose on UKOTs but to work out how GBNI-based resources can be most effective in helping conservation in them.
- There is an element of raising the profile of the UKOTs, to which we can all contribute: the reality of things on ground in order to get the public behind it.
- We must be realistic.
- We must all remember that we are working in a political climate where resources are extremely limited and further cuts are expected.

JNCC was open to suggestions on how to arrive at an agreed list and felt that more topics would be useful so that resources (not just financial) could be deployed in these areas. Several NGOs agreed that there were effective organisations working in and across the UKOTs who were able to share best practice and have a lot to input into this exercise; this was a real opportunity to work together.

The meeting confirmed its support for developing a set of agreed priorities for the use of GBNI-based bodies supporting conservation in the UKOTs & CDs. At the 3rd Meeting, the initial tabulation was summarised into 12 shared areas with common features. The chair felt that JNCC in the present meeting suggesting three priorities was also a useful contribution but we needed further input from the group on what the priorities should be

Several further points made in the discussion included:

- The importance was recognised of effective environmental legislation in providing essential underpinning and mechanisms across topics.
- Environmental education and awareness is a very important issue and part of the Aichi targets, whereas UK Government has removed its eligibility for UKOT environmental funding, except as elements of other projects – which is not effective for formal education.
- Marine issues are complex and there is a widespread misunderstanding of the cultural value of them as ecosystem services. This is the reason why users do not value their management. Some UKOT governments do not have an idea of how much they are worth.
- Another NGO added that this concept was also important for terrestrial systems, and formed the basis of one of the summaries of common areas in the analysis presented at the 3rd meeting: getting users of the environment as its champions; this might additionally encourage effective deployment in some territories of their good, but little used, planning legislation.
- Taking significant funding into consideration, in addition to threats/opportunities, was an important part of this discussion.
- Many in the group felt that its strength is that all members of the group are able to bring different approaches.
- One NGO felt that we should keep the focus on areas where biodiversity is really not doing very well. It was noted that this is valid, but needs to avoid a territory-by-territory approach at the level of overall priorities because of impinging on the UKOTs' leads.

- Climate change was discussed as an undoubted major issue, but it was considered that it cut across several other priority areas and, in the present context, was best addressed through them.
- It was noted that the discussion was moving towards two sorts of priority areas, those closely related to immediate conservation and supporting ones which are essential for the implementation of the more direct priorities. It was agreed to include both types.

Bearing in mind the 12 areas summarised by UKOTCF in the 3rd meeting as emerging from the first tabulation, the three areas identified by JNCC in their papers for this meeting, and the discussions in the meeting, the following initial list of priority themes (not in priority order) arose:

1. Restoring threatened species and ecosystems, including by addressing Invasive Alien Species
2. Marine Conservation, including both protected areas and making sustainable users champions for conservation
3. Terrestrial Planning and complementing/reinforcing this by getting businesses depending on the natural resources to become champions
4. Improving, collating and sharing evidence and knowledge
5. Environmental education and awareness
6. Ecosystem Services and Natural Capital (see also 2 and 3)
7. Resource Mobilisation

The group agreed that a way of moving forward would be a small group to work on the priority areas, building on the work of this and previous meetings of the group, and prepare a workshop to consider matters further. JNCC agreed to facilitate the organisation of this.

A sub-group consisting of James Millett (RSPB), Mike Pienkowski (UKOTCF), Tom Appleby (Blue Marine Foundation) and Paul Rose (JNCC) (or their colleagues) would convene in early January. They would be free to consult others especially on areas of particular interest. It was agreed that both a chair and convenor would be needed for the sub-group. Any key papers of the sub-group would be emailed to the whole group.

4. Defra to update on gap analysis

Defra was not present and no update had been received. However, it was known that the deadline for the tender was 15th December. The contract would start on 5th January and would last for 6 months, so that it will be some time until that contribution is available.

FCO had been invited to attend meetings, but had not yet done so.

The meeting noted with regret that the last half-post in DFID concerned with UKOT environmental matters had been ended.

JNCC would contact FCO and Defra about future attendance.

5. Data access, sharing and analysis

JNCC provided a brief update on this (Paper 2014/23). The project had one simple aim: to bring all the data into the public domain. 45 organisations across UK had been contacted and a brief telephone meeting with 25 of them had been held. A follow-up meeting would take place in early 2015.

JNCC anticipated that the GBIF platform is likely to be used to access UKOT data. GBIF is secure for a few more years. In response to questions, JNCC indicated that, even if GBIF were to fail, the data could readily be exported elsewhere.

Discussions had been held also with the Natural History Museum and RSPB.

6. Update on actions from previous meetings

Meeting 1, Action 2

This matter would be pursued in other fora.

Meeting 1, Action 3

It was confirmed that agreed final (but not draft) notes of meetings could go online.

Meeting 3, Action 1

UKOTCF was thanked for producing the sorted consolidated list. It was noted that some papers for the current meeting had been mis-numbered or not numbered. UKOTCF would issue a new definitive version of the list and continue to maintain it.

It was agreed that the paper numbering would start again at 01 in each year, for example P2015/01.

Meeting 3, Action 4

UKOTCF confirmed that the Projects module of its web-database would be suitable to hold ideas for project needs, as well as information on current and past projects, provided that it is recognised that this information is public.

Meeting 3, Action 6

JNCC indicated that B4Life is the successor to the tropical funding programme in the European Commission's DEVCO. However, no mechanism is clear yet. JNCC will investigate and report back.

Item 7 Circulation List

UKOTCF had produced a tidied list (Paper 2014/22). It indicated that it was aware of some additions and would issue an update after the meeting, giving other participants the chance to advise of further corrections.

All would check the list for missing contacts. It was noted that there were missing dots in some of the JNCC addresses, and that Jo Royal should be added in for Pew.

It was agreed that UKOTCF should continue to maintain the list, and changes should be advised to them. It was noted that everything can be stored on Huddle, which some felt could be a useful platform. Another view was to maintain information in one place as opposed to storing it on a platform such as Huddle, where there was a danger of returning to unmanaged changes.

8. Gibraltar Conference

An update was provided by UKOTCF on the conference it is organising with the Government of Gibraltar.

The purpose of the conference, as for its predecessors, is to provide an opportunity to exchange best practice and experience, identify common issues and develop long-term partnerships.

Information and booking forms could be found on the website (www.ukotcf.org) as well as an outline programme. This information would be updated and become more detailed as plans develop.

At least one NGO from each territory will be supported to attend and JNCC will provide support to one governmental conservation participant from each, both sources being combined for a participant

from the most distant UKOT. These and other key contributors have been invited. There are a few others that UKOTCF would like to invite, but whether this proves possible will depend on either securing further funding or savings against budget as the first invitees respond and their costs are determined. A major current exercise was to chase responses, important for both the above reason and because flight costs increase with time.

As for previous conferences, most GBNI NGOs were expected to support their own representatives. The general booking form, available on the web-site (www.ukotcf.org), was appropriate for them, and invitations had already been sent to most, with others following in case they had not seen the web-site.

The topics had been agreed following wide discussions and consultations. It was not possible to accommodate all topics, because a minimum session time is needed for each if there is to be progress. There will not be parallel sessions because these are unpopular in the territories because of there generally often being only one participant per organisation (or even per territory). Consequently, the number of talks available has to be quite limited in order to have meaningful discussion. An attempt is made to give each territory the chance to present at least one talk. However, there is a completely open invitation for posters, which will be on display throughout the conference and published alongside spoken contributions. Both talks and posters will be there primarily to stimulate discussion (both formal and informal) to meet the conference objectives. To aid this, each topic session is being guided by a small, widely drawn team. The conference aims to make some clear recommendations; work on drafting these will start in advance, so that participants can be well prepared to consider.

Gibraltar Government would be holding a high-level meeting for territory ministers and their equivalents following the conference. This was an opportunity for decision-makers to explore their responses to the conference recommendations and other matters with regard to the environment.

9. Any other business/date of next meeting

9.1 BEST and Guadeloupe conference

There was some discussion on the International Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change held in Guadeloupe in late October, organised by the French Government, the Region of Guadeloupe, the European Commission, IUCN, with others. Many who had attended felt that it had been rather badly organized. Several invited participants had not received tickets from the organisers in time and so could not attend. The conference had been conducted mainly in five parallel sessions. Sessions themselves were badly organized. In a process that had not been announced, a group apparently dominated by the European Commission had repeatedly edited the recommendations of the workshops, continually changing the final message. It had not yet been checked the degree to which the published version (http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/europe/activities/overseas/overseas_resources/overseas_news/?18654/Message-from-Guadeloupe-a-roadmap-for-actions-to-2020) differed from that agreed by participants.

In the funding workshop, the European Commission had indicated that there would be a new programme starting in 2015, provisionally called BEST 2.0. Despite being from a different funding source, this was intended to develop the original preparatory BEST (the Voluntary scheme for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services in Territories of EU Overseas). The three years of that had sometimes been referred to as BEST I, II and III.

9.2 Next meeting

The group agreed that the workshop discussed earlier would probably take place in March and the next JNCC/NGO Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Meeting would probably take place in late April/early May. If the workshop were delayed significantly, the timing of the next meeting would be re-considered to avoid too long a gap between meetings.

The group recognised that there would be a period of purdah before the general election in May 2015, which could mean that UK Government officials are even less ready to comment on policy.

The meeting closed at 16:20pm.

Summary of Action Points

1. The group agreed that a way of moving forward would be a small group to work on the priority areas, building on the work of this and previous meetings of the group, and prepare a workshop to consider matters further. JNCC agreed to facilitate the organisation of this. A sub-group consisting of James Millett (RSPB), Mike Pienkowski (UKOTCF), Tom Appleby (Blue Marine Foundation), Peter Richardson (Marine Conservation Society), Jenny Daltry (Fauna and Flora International) and Paul Rose (JNCC) (or their colleagues) would convene in early January. They would be free to consult others especially on areas of particular interest. It was agreed that both a chair and convenor would be needed for the sub-group. Any key papers of the sub-group would be emailed to the whole group.
2. JNCC would contact FCO and Defra about future attendance at the group's meetings.
3. It was confirmed that agreed final (but not draft) notes of meetings could go online (JNCC to action).
4. UKOTCF would issue a new definitive version of the list of papers and continue to maintain it.
5. JNCC indicated that B4Life is the successor to the tropical funding programme in the European Commission's DEVCO. However, no mechanism is clear yet. JNCC will investigate and report back.
6. All would check the list for missing contacts. UKOTCF should continue to maintain the list, and changes should be advised to them.
7. The group agreed that the workshop discussed earlier would probably take place in March and the next JNCC/NGO Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Meeting would probably take place in late April/early May. If the workshop were delayed significantly, the timing of the next meeting would be re-considered to avoid too long a gap between meetings.