

9th OTBG Meeting

1 November 2012. Defra 11:00 am – 1.30pm

9th Meeting of the Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group Held at Nobel House

Report on meeting

Attendees – in person

Eric Blencowe, Defra (Chair)
Siôn Griffiths, FCO
Kedell Worboys, UKOTA
Colin Clubbe Kew
Nicola Clarke Defra
Amanda Gregory JNCC
Tony Weighell, JNCC

Chris Mahon IUCN UK
(joined the meeting at 12.30)

Attendees – phone

Sally Cunningham, Defra
Tina Blandford, Defra

Apologies

DECC
DFID

Main business

1. Matters arising and report of previous meeting

The report of the last meeting was agreed. It was noted that Defra had prepared a member report for the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) meeting in Australia, which Jane Hawkridge from JNCC attended on behalf of the UK.

Action Point: Tina to circulate the Member report and note of the ICRI meeting to the OTBG group.

2. Round table updates

FCO

- the DfID led climate change priorities assessment work has now been completed; all reports are now complete and quality-control issues have been addressed. Discussion are currently taking place on how and when the reports should be released;
- In future DECC will lead on behalf of HMG on OT climate change issues (with input from Defra on climate-change adaptation). Darren Freezor will be the contact;
- FCO has been reviewing the environment-related articles for the new Overseas Association Decision (OAD). The OAD determines the relationship between the EU and the Overseas Countries and Territories. The current agreement expires at the end of 2013 and the FCO is in the process of negotiating the new text. One of our key commitments in the White Paper is to ensure that OT environment policy and needs are taken into account in the new Decision.
- the Darwin Plus funding stream, designed to replace OTEP and OT elements of the Darwin Initiative, has been announced (see below);
- The FCO has been in discussion with the Governor's offices in Bermuda and Cayman to scope Environmental Mainstreaming projects in those territories;
- James Jansen is now returning to Defra after being seconded to the FCO.

UKOTA

- The OT student workshop has been postponed due to insufficient interest;
- UKOTA has continued to lobby MEPs to raise the profile of the OTs and support is growing within the EU but this support must include funding;
- There is a need for HMG to ensure that the OTs receive adequate advance notice of international conferences, opportunities to participate and sufficient feedback. When OT personnel do attend it needs to be clear in what capacity – representing their own OT or collective views;

DEFRA

- Darwin Round 19 applications are now in progress with stage two in progress. There are a significant number of OT applications.
- In advance of the 2013 CITES meeting in Bangkok HMG is consulting with the OTs in particular in relation to turtles and manta rays. In making contact with the OTs Defra indicated it wanted to establish multiple points of contact to ensure an adequate response;
- Defra would value having marine contact points in the OTs to establish a dialogue in respect of relevant UK and international work particularly in respect of cetaceans;
- Eric Blencowe's role in Defra is changing and he will not be chairing the OTBG meetings in future although will continue to be the main Defra contact for the OTs until a successor is announced.

KEW

Kew made a written submission which is attached.

JNCC

- In addition to the Biodiversity Strategy review and Anguilla Green Economy projects which are discussed below, JNCC is currently directly funding and or managing a variety of significant projects as listed below (this does not include minor projects throughout the South Atlantic and Caribbean);
- Anguilla – marine and terrestrial habitats mapping; development of GIS capacity including training OT personnel; lionfish ecology and monitoring; scoping an Anguillan NEA; initiating an environmental economics project;
- BVI - initiating an environmental economics project as a follow-up to the Green Economy project;
- Falkland Islands – advising the Falkland Island Government on developing an environmental economics project.

3. Environmental Audit Committee

The Environmental Audit Committee, in its 2008 report entitled Halting Biodiversity Loss, identified some strategic recommendations for protecting biodiversity in the UK's OTs. A new enquiry, to be held in December 2012, will assess how far these recommendations have been implemented. Defra is coordinating the Government's submission to the EAC, for which the deadline is 30th November. The FCO has been informing its stakeholders, through the Governors Offices, of the opportunity to offer submissions to the Committee. UKOTA will also make a submission.

4. Joint Ministerial Council

The JMC will be held on the 4th and 5th of December in London. There will be an environmental segment (a one hour session) on Wednesday the 5th. FCO Minister Mark Simmonds and Defra Minister Richard Benyon will attend along with senior DECC

officials. Key issues identified for discussion include waste management, climate change resilience, sustainable fisheries and economic evaluation of natural resources. Each topic will be led by a different OT.

The evening reception will include a ministerial speech which should have environmental content.

5. OT Biodiversity Strategy Review and Implementation

JNCC summarised the Strategy Review based on the attached summary.

The key aspects of the review are:

1. it will involve HMG, OT and NGO participants;
2. a meeting on 14th March at Kew will be the core component of the review;
3. the review will look at progress made to date on implementing the Strategy and take a forward look at priorities.

JNCC is inviting OT-based biodiversity specialists to attend the meeting and will provide financial support. UKOTA suggested that its London based members will wish to be involved.

Action point: JNCC will liaise with the FCO and UKOTA in respect of OT attendees at the meeting.

6. Guernsey CBD meeting

Eric Blencowe reported on the October CBD meeting held in Guernsey. The meeting was welcomed by participants as an opportunity for Guernsey and the Falklands Islands, who are considering the merits of signing up to the Convention, to learn from the experience of the Isle of Man and Jersey who are signatories. Defra were able to make it clear that OTs and CDs considering the value of the Convention were not required to participate and report to the same extent and same level of detail as the UK itself.

Action point: JNCC, who sponsored the event, will prepare a report on the conference later this year.

7. Hyderabad COP

Eric Blencowe reported that the major issues under discussion at this biennial meeting of the 193 parties to the Convention were: resource mobilisation, which is vital for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020; the interactions between the CBD and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); marine biodiversity; and ensuring that evidence-based decisions were taken on the new and emerging issues of synthetic biology and geo-engineering.

At Nagoya, the Parties had agreed a strategic plan to halt biodiversity loss by 2020, and a new Protocol on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources (the Nagoya Protocol on ABS). Protecting biodiversity supports the livelihoods of the poorest people in the world who rely on the ecosystems services which nature provides.

Doubling international financial flows by 2015 from a variety of sources (public, private and civil society) and holding this level at least constant to 2020 will support countries in meeting their commitments under the strategic plan. In addition, the agreement establishes a new process to make more transparent the resources being committed domestically by developing countries; and makes it clear that any increase in international flows will be dependent on developing countries giving increased priority to biodiversity in their development plans. This ensures the continued ownership of aid priorities by developing countries.

In addition to the agreement on resource mobilisation, the Conference:

- reaffirmed commitments made in Nagoya in 2010 on implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets. An indicator framework for assessing progress towards the 20 'Aichi Targets' to reduce the rate of biodiversity loss, to be used at global and national levels was agreed, based on the results of an expert meeting hosted by the UK in 2011;
- agreed advice on applying biodiversity safeguards for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD+) without cutting across the UNFCCC;
- made acceptable decisions on collaboration between Parties on ecosystems-based approaches to adaptation and on geo-engineering, which does not pre-empt discussions in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; and
- decided that marine areas which meet the criteria for Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) will be stored in a repository for other authorities to use and examine.

Finally, an Islands "Summit" took place on the afternoon and evening of Monday 15th October. Dr Samia Sarkis from Bermuda and Dr Vicki Young from JNCC attended the substantive discussion in the daytime, and Eric Blencowe represented Minister Benyon at the evening event, which was attended by many notables, including Deputy Premier Kedrick Pickering from the BVI, who gave a resounding speech.

8. Darwin Plus announcement

The Overseas Territories Environment and Climate Fund (to be known as 'Darwin Plus') was recently launched by Defra's environment Minister Richard Benyon. The Fund aims to provide a simpler and more co-ordinated mechanism to support OT natural environment issues by acting as a 'one-stop-shop' source of funding. The remit of the new Fund will be broad, incorporating both biodiversity-related issues funded under the Darwin Initiative, as well as the broader range of environment and climate-related issues funded under OTEP. The new Fund will continue to be accessible to OT Governments, NGOs, research institutions, the private sector and other stakeholders.

A separate review panel will be established under the Darwin Expert Committee to deal with applications. It was pointed out that project support under the new scheme will be

for two years, because financial commitments cannot be made beyond the current spending review period.

9. Anguilla Green Economy project (JNCC)

JNCC summarised progress on the Green Economy project currently underway in Anguilla and funded by Defra. A Project Oversight Group has been established chaired by the Deputy Governor and the group has identified a list of Anguillan stakeholders who will be consulted as part of the process to identify key actions needed to integrate environmental issues into planning for a Green Economy. A contractor (CANARI) has been appointed and will begin stakeholder consultation in November. The two-day seminar associated with the project will be held in February 2013. A third day of technical sessions will be used to highlight a range of projects currently being supported by HMG. JNCC is considering using this meeting to initiate regional discussions to establish the need for a coordinated response to the lionfish invasion in the UK's OTs.

10. The next meeting of the group will be in early 2013.

Action point: Defra/JNCC will look for a suitable date.

Chris Mahon from the UK IUCN Committee joined the Group during the second half of meeting. The IUCN UK is interested in developing links to the UK OT work and Defra invited them to attend the 14th March meeting as observers (Item 5 above refers).

The meeting concluded at approximately 1.30