

Meeting note

17th Meeting of the Overseas Territories Biodiversity Group
To be held in Room E, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London
21st July 2015 - 1100-1300

Attendees:

CH Clare Hamilton (Defra)
TP Tara Pelembe (JNCC)
CC Colin Clubbe (Kew)
SG Stewart Guy (MOD)
KB Kylie Bamford (FCO)
SS Simon Smith (FCO)

By phone:

MB Mark Baxter (Defra)
SC Sally Cunningham (Defra)
NA Nick Andrew-Gauvain (MOD)
NL Natasha Lewis (Defra)
CL Chris Lyal (NHM)
EH Eram Qureshi-Hasan (FCO)

For specific agenda items

SJ Simon Johnson (Defra)
LL Laura-Louise O'Reilly (Defra)
NM Niall Moore Chief Non-native Species
officer for England)

Apologies

SH Stacey Hughes (Defra)
DB Dick Beales (DfID)
TW Tony Weighell (JNCC)
PN Paul Newbegin (SBAA Cyprus)
AE Alan Evans (NOC)
KW Kedell Worboys (UKOTA)
RS Richard Snow (MOD)

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1. Introductions, apologies and review of actions from previous meeting

2. Cross-Government Working

a. Post-election update, including manifesto commitments – Kylie Bamford

In the previous OTBG, the group had discussed the preparation of a series of cross-government department ministerial briefings on key areas. This was no longer relevant. However, there are number of queries from stakeholders relating to ministerial commitments under the elected governments manifesto.

KB updated the group on the conservative manifesto commitment i.e. *We will now go even further, creating a Blue Belt around the UK's 14 Overseas Territories, subject to local support and environmental need. We will designate a further protected area at Ascension Island, subject to the views of the local community. And, off our own coasts, we will complete the network of Marine Conservation Zones that we have already started, to create a UK Blue Belt of protected sites*¹.

FCO have been working on an overarching concept involving ecosystem management which is currently with the Minister for agreement. This will then be discussed with the OTs, other government departments and their relevant ministers so that everyone is in agreement with the approach.

The FCO and OTs will undertake an audit of the current level of marine protection in place and where any potential gaps are. UK Gov can then begin to look at a long term strategy for working with the OTs.

For Pitcairn and Ascension, FCO are working with Pew on options for long term surveillance, there is interim funding for at least the next year or two for this work. The results will be brought to OTBG and can be used as test cases for other OTs. The approach will look at IUU fishing globally as well as local threats.

KB confirmed that initial discussions on the 'blue belt' approach are considering estuarine and mangrove systems as these provide a buffer between terrestrial and marine.

JNCC offered to provide expertise to feed into this process.

b. Remit of OTBG – Clare Hamilton

CH provided an update to the group on OTBG, its origin and remit. In summary, OTBG was created in 2010 under the last labour government and was taken forward under the coalition government. OTBG's remit is defined by the OTBS. There have been recent discussions within the group around the widening of the remit to include all environmental management rather than just biodiversity. One of the key drivers for this proposal is the annual JMC where the discussions and commitments around environment include areas such as waste and energy in addition to biodiversity. It was thought that a single group co-ordinating a cross government delivery of these commitments was more efficient than multiple groups for multiple areas of environmental management. Previous OTBG discussions had suggested preparing a paper for ministers on the composition of the group and widening of the remit.

KB indicated that over the next few years FCO will focus on marine, and are looking at setting up a steering group/discussion group for MPAs, with relevant people from OTBG linked in either in person or by correspondence. This could then remove MPAs from the OTBG agenda.

The discussion included

- the relationship between the Marine steering group and OTBG.

¹ <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/manifesto2015/ConservativeManifesto2015.pdf>

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- Confirmation that there is no working group looking at waste, energy and water quality, but enquiries on this can be passed to FCO
- Awareness has to be raised within the departments.

c. JMC Preparations (including JMC Communiqué updates) – Eram Qureshi-Hasan

EQ sent around the table on road maps. KB informed the group that a submission has gone to ministers and the 3 key themes which JMC will focus on will be economic development, child safeguarding and UK and OTs 2030. The white paper will be the springboard for these discussions. There isn't an environmental component as this featured heavily last year, and therefore there is a lot of work in progress to deliver on these environmental commitments that have been set in previous years.

There were a number of points covered in the discussion as follows:

- Issues would emerge from the Gibraltar conference
- Sustainable development goals
- There was a meeting in Bermuda with OT leaders to feed their views on what should be added to JMC
- OTs are interested in including other topics such as pensions in discussions
- Defra would like to suggest changes to the roadmaps for activities and milestones allocated to them.
- Need to be clear on the purpose of the road maps and report.

3. Engagement

a. Review of the Gibraltar Conference, including any actions arising – Clare Hamilton

TP, CC and KB were in attendance at the Gibraltar conference. Feedback included:

- It was seen as very useful meeting in providing the opportunity to get together with OT governments and reps from UK and OT NGOs. There were useful discussions with people on a variety of issues, and it was good to see the quantity of work that is going on in OTs as a result of Darwin Plus funding. A large number of the projects presented were Darwin funded.
- Concern was raised at the conference that Darwin Plus hasn't been launched.
- There seemed to be a lot of interest from NGOs around making the environment charters more prominent, but this interest wasn't mirrored by OT governments. The view from the latter seemed to be that the charters are c. 14 years old and things have moved on, and a lot of work has been done since then.
- The recommendations from the meeting were long, some of them pre-prepared and it is not clear how they will be transmitted or what the process for approving them will be.
- The new chair of the EAC has asked for the conference recommendations to be submitted to the EAC for follow up.
- It was good to see the involvement of OT and CD ministers.
- The JNCC OTTRSG face-to-face workshop was a good event.

b. Feedback from OT Workshop on 5th May – Tara Pelembe

TP gave a brief update on the OT workshop held on the 5th May at JNCC. Meeting notes and reports available online <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4374>

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c. OTBG Stakeholder meeting – Clare Hamilton

It had originally been planned to the OTBG stakeholder meeting back to back with this OTBG meeting, but this clashed with the UKOTCF event. Therefore the OTBG Stakeholder meeting would be deferred to October/November 2015.

d. UK government report on OTBS implementation – Mark Baxter

UK government produced a 2014 report on implementation of the OTBS and it was agreed that this would be done annually. The 2015 update was deferred for the elections, and needed to be revised as there was no coherent narrative running through it. It would be good to have a draft to circulate to stakeholders before the stakeholder meeting.

4. New agenda item – working with the Netherlands

At the last meeting, there was a discussion around a joint meeting in London, possibly hosted by the NHM, looking at collaborations and synergies with the Dutch Government and its Overseas Territories.

SS gave an update on progress on this. At a workshop earlier in the year with the Dutch, it was agreed that there were 3 areas would be considered initially

- Waste management
- Sustainable tourism
- Good governance and capacity building.

Waste management issues are being taken forward – initially through mapping what the main issues are, and which OTs have waste management systems in place. For example, Cayman has issued a consultation on a waste management strategy.

Next steps: The mapping/audit of who is doing what is the first next step (e.g. UNEP project with Caricom, green deals, WRAP etc). SS will work with relevant groups on taking this forward. It has not progressed to the stage where the NHM meeting is required.

5. Funding

a. Update on Darwin Plus – Sally Cunningham

SC gave the group some background and an update on Darwin Plus. In 2010, when there was a general election, there was no Darwin round at all. This time there was a drive to get Darwin and Darwin Plus launched as soon as possible after the elections. There was some discussion that included:

- Concerns raised in Gibraltar suggest that additional communication might be required to clarify the Darwin Plus selection process and the role of LTS

b. Update on Best – Eram Qureshi-Hasan

SS gave an update on the new Best 2. It is hoped that calls will be issued in September. There was some concern from OTs on how BEST is run. CH suggested that it would be useful to have agreed lines to go into the September meeting on BEST which she is attending.

c. Update on Life – Tara Pelembe

Tara to provide written update

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d. Update on Biodiversa – Tara Pelembe

Tara to provide written update

6. Research

a. Update on Defra OT gap analysis project – Natasha Lewis

NL gave some background and an update on this project. This is a defra-funded project managed by NERC CEH who have pulled together a database of all work on OTs that has been completed since 2009. This will be validated by the OTs to see if anything has been missing, and will be matched to the JMC communiqué commitments to see if the work is delivering on these. The project aims to identify gaps in research with the aim of having a more focussed approach to commissioning research. The project is due to finish end of August/early September. Discussion included the following points:

- A potential follow on project could be to link this work to MAPISCO as a means of prioritising the gaps identified.
- Availability of funding for identified gaps included as part of the project
- This will be a 'living' framework that will be added to in the future.

b. OT data access project (Paper to follow) – Tara Pelembe

The paper presented to the meeting was discussed in combination with item c. Below.

c. Data access contract provisions – Tara Pelembe

JNCC is working with Defra to develop a metadata catalogue for Darwin Plus generated outputs.

7. AOB

a. GB Non-Native Species Strategy – Niall Moore

At the meeting in Gibraltar there was a suggestion that the matrix of possible joint working areas could be turned from what the OTs can do for the NGOs to an offer document from NGOs i.e. what they have to offer OT governments.

NM gave the group an update on what is happening on IAS. NM is the head of the GBNNS and the Chief Non Natives Species Officer for England based at APHA in York. The GB Invasive Non-Native Species Strategy was agreed in 2007, launched in 2008. It included a mention of the OTs with an action to keep OTs and CDs informed about what is happening in GB.

A 5-year review of the strategy has been completed and the strategy is about to be re-launched. In the review process, a number of organisations said that there wasn't enough being done about OTs. In response to this, in the new updated strategy there is an action (9.5) to strengthen support for OTs and CDs e.g. continuing invertebrate id service, sharing expertise and providing training including training on biosecurity. Has gone up agenda – monthly meetings with ministers. Discussion included:

- Thanks for efforts in increasing support for OTs in this document
- The impact of the new strategy on the MOD and what needs to be incorporated into the MOD programme as a result
- How this is reflected in IMO commitments.
- EU IAS regulation launched but doesn't cover OTs.

b. Earth Observations – open access to data – capturing work that has already happened and work going forward – Laura-Louise O'Reilly

LO updated the group on a cross Whitehall meeting to be held on the 18th August chaired by DECC which will be the first opportunity to get initial ideas on cross Whitehall priorities on earth observation, and an opportunity to raise OT interests. LO shared a presentation with the group providing background on this initiative.