

## **UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Training and Research Programme Steering Group**

Report of Meeting held 25-26 January 2012  
Peterborough

### **Background**

In 2009 the Steering Group (SG) met to prepare a Workplan to guide the implementation of the UK Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies Training and Research Programme for the period January 2010 through March 2012. Since then the SG has convened quarterly to assess progress and update the Workplan. With the period covered by that initial Workplan drawing to a close, JNCC organised a two-day meeting of the Steering Group to prepare a new Workplan for the period 2012-2015.

Steering Group members were invited to participate in person, by telephone or by email. Six members participated in person on both days, along with representatives of JNCC. Representatives of four additional OTs and CDs participated by email and in the telephone hook-up session on the second day of the meeting. Representatives of several UK-based organisations that support research and training in the OTs and CDs participated in the first day of the meeting to share information about collaborative activities and opportunities. A list of participants is attached at Annex 1.

### **Process**

Prior to the meeting, JNCC had prepared and circulated a “zero draft”, based on the ongoing activities of the current Workplan, as a framework for preparing the 2012-2015 Workplan. During the meeting the draft was displayed on a screen (and by Internet document share for remote participants during the phone hook-up session) so that agreed changes could be entered and viewed in real time. JNCC arranged for an external facilitator to manage the meeting so that its staff and SG members could give their full attention to the preparation of the Workplan.

During the first day, the six SG members who participated in person served as a working group to review the zero draft and develop recommendations on the new Workplan. During the course of the day, the representatives of UK-based organisations made presentations and offered information that fed into this process, which resulted in a first draft that was shared with remote participants by email at the end of the day. On the morning of the second day, the meeting turned to those issues that were not fully resolved the previous day. The remote participants joined the meeting in the afternoon and provided their input to the draft. By the end of meeting, a new Workplan agreed by all the participating SG members had been produced. The final business of the meeting was a discussion on the future membership and operations of the SG.

The agenda for the meeting is attached at Annex 2.

### **Workplan 2012-2015**

The Workplan is structured around the following six objectives, five of which are the same as, or modified versions of, those in the previous Workplan (2010-2012):

1. Training and capacity building for individuals and organisations in the OTs and CDs
2. Access to external research and advisory expertise
3. Activities to enhance knowledge transfer among OTs and CDs and wider (e.g., regional)
4. Collaboration with educational institutions on tertiary-level training
5. Implementation of research and strategic priorities

## 6. Maximising funding opportunities

The new Workplan carries over a number of activities from the previous period, drops some activities and revises or adds others. The following summarises the main points discussed under each objective:

### **1. Training and capacity building**

- Researchers with postgraduate (MSc and PhD) training are in short supply and scholarships are therefore a high priority. Unfortunately the current funding environment for scholarships is poor, but JNCC will continue to look for sources of support, including partial support.
- The SG continues to consider improved environmental education in schools to be a priority, but given the different needs and existing programmes in each OT/CD, it is difficult to determine how the Programme can best support that objective. One option that was proposed was an extension of the existing JNCC-sponsored Blue Turtle Award to include awards to schools.

*Action:* The meeting agreed that JNCC will prepare and circulate a concept note to be considered at a subsequent SG meeting.

### **2. Access to external research and advisory expertise**

- Most of the activities under this objective are currently covered through a MoU with the University of Reading. Demand for services under the MoU has so far been lower than anticipated, but may increase with time.
- The current MoU will expire soon; there is therefore a need to assess whether it is the most cost effective way of accessing expertise and advisory services. There is also a need to explore other channels for linking OTs and CDs to expertise in the UK and elsewhere, including resources in other universities and in institutions such as Kew, Fera and JNCC itself. Individual SG members already have contacts and were encouraged to share information and develop new linkages.

*Action:* JNCC (Tony Weighell) invited SG members to send their comments on the MoU and possible alternatives to him by email.

### **3. Enhancing knowledge transfer**

- An activity to share best practices and possibly develop a standard approach to EIA was included in the last Workplan, but little progress had been made beyond the establishment of a page on the JNCC website for sharing materials. The meeting confirmed the relevance and importance of shared learning to improve EIA practice, but was not able to agree on the best way to achieve that, given the varying situations and needs in the different OTs/CDs.

*Action:* For further discussion at a subsequent SG meeting.

- The SG remains keen to find a means to bring researchers from the OTs and CDs together in a workshop or conference, but the decision not to hold a UKOT Conservation Forum conference in 2012 due to lack of funding eliminates the most promising vehicle for doing so, given high costs and logistical challenges.

*Action:* SG to ask FCO and DFID to reconsider the decision not to fund the UKOTCF conference, or to consider funding a separate event, given the potential benefits of bringing researchers together. SG also to approach the inter-departmental OT Biodiversity Group to explore options.

### **4. Collaboration on tertiary-level training**

- During the last Workplan period the SG decided to explore the possibility of developing and presenting a course module on biodiversity valuation to improve practice in the OTs and CDs. Samia Sarkis (Bermuda) has identified relevant and interested expertise and a research institution to host the module. The meeting agreed that there was a shared need for this type of training, but more work was needed to develop the activity, including assessing what resources already exist.

*Action:* SG to establish a working group to take the concept forward.

- The last Workplan included an activity to develop a “teacher transfer module” to increase the level of attention to environmental education in local school curricula. No progress was made, and although the issue remains a priority, it is still not clear how best to proceed. The output therefore has been retained in the new Workplan, but activities still need to be defined.

*Action:* For further discussion at a subsequent SG meeting.

### **5. Implementation of research and strategic priorities**

- Tony Weighell described the current situation regarding funding available through JNCC for conservation priorities in the OTs and CDs. Funding will continue for “contribution contracts” of up to £3,000, which SG members can apply for. In past years, there has been additional funding available near the end of the financial year due to underspending in other budget lines. These funds can also be tapped for priority activities, including ones with budgets higher than £3,000. In the past, there has been a scramble to identify priority projects once the amount of year-end funding becomes known. Tony suggested that if OTs and CDs could provide JNCC with more detail regarding research and strategic priorities over the coming year, it would be in a better position to allocate year-end funding and any other funding that might become available. OTs and CDs were therefore asked to expand on their lists of priorities beyond the three research priorities provided in past years to include all major priorities including those that, while not being strictly research activities, would contribute to improved management or institutional capacity.

*Action:* JNCC to provide template for listing and describing research and strategic priorities and circulate to SG members to prepare and submit.

### **6. Maximising funding opportunities**

- Tony indicated to the meeting that after this year, when funding levels should actually be higher than in previous years, funding available for the Programme is likely to contract significantly as UK Government budget cuts take effect. He therefore urged a more pro-active approach to funding the Programme, using the coming year to prospect for future funding, including longer-term support to the Programme. The meeting agreed to his suggestion to develop a three-year proposal for funding programme priorities and to begin systematically prospecting for potential funding sources.

*Action:* SG to begin work on a 3-year proposal based on guidance provided by JNCC.

- Tony also raised the possibility of convening another in-person meeting of the SG in a year, in order to take stock of progress on securing future funding for the Programme, to meet with potential supporters, and to assess future needs. The SG responded positively to the idea.

## **Interventions from UK-based participants**

The meeting included brief presentations or interventions from the representatives of FCO, Defra, Kew, and the University of Reading.

Heather Christie (FCO) gave an update on the development of a new strategy for the OTs, which began in September. The consultation process resulted in over 500 inputs, which are now being analysed. The SG was highlighted in the input to the strategy submitted by Defra.

Eric Blencowe (Defra) discussed opportunities through Defra over the coming year, given high-level interest in the OTs and a favourable funding environment, with small grants available for discrete initiatives and the potential for channelling end-of-year funding to programme priorities. He also noted that Defra could be used as an entry point for OTs and CDs to tap into UK Government expertise and other resources.

Eric reported that an implementation plan for the OT Biodiversity Strategy was to be prepared, and that he was working to assure that the process would be OT-driven rather than a technocratic exercise resulting in a prescriptive plan. He also noted that the Convention on Biodiversity was conducting a review of island biodiversity, with a meeting in Canada in April. He hopes that some of the OTs can participate in that and in the CBD Conference of Parties in October as members of the UK Delegation. He is also happy to relay comments from the OTs to the Delegation. A copy of Eric's formal presentation to be posted on JNCC website.

Ken Norris and Katherine Booth Jones of the University of Reading described progress and challenges in implementing the MoU with the SG, which were summarised in the presentation (to be posted on the JNCC website).

Colin Clubbe of Kew gave an update on plans for the workshop for OT students in the UK, which will be held in September 2012. He also discussed ways in which Kew does or could support conservation research in the OTs and CDs. He noted that Kew engages graduate students to work on its projects around the world, and suggested that could offer opportunities for students and researchers from the OTs and CDs.

## **Membership and operations of the Steering Group**

Since it was established, the membership of the Steering Group has been comprised of representatives of Environment Departments or other relevant agencies in the OTs and CDs, with JNCC providing the Secretariat and Defra, DFID and the University of Reading participating in meetings as auxiliary members. From time to time, there have been requests from other institutions active in conservation issues in the OTs and CDs to become members of the Group. The meeting agreed that while it has been useful to invite outside institutions to meetings in order to draw on their expertise and further collaboration, formally expanding the Group would make it unwieldy and could divert its focus from the needs of the OTs and CDs themselves.

*Action:* JNCC to communicate the decision of the Group to outside institutions that have inquired about membership.

## **Process review**

In concluding the meeting, Tony indicated that JNCC would like to assess the process that was used to develop the new Workplan, including its costs and benefits to participants, and had therefore asked the facilitator to undertake a post-meeting review through a confidential survey of both face-to-face and telephone participants.

Tony also confirmed JNCC's desire to convene another face-to-face meeting in a year's time, to take stock of progress on the Programme and funding, and also to provide opportunities for the SG to engage with UK-based institutions and colleagues involved in OT and CD conservation research and training.

### Annex 1: List of participants

<b>Steering Group members</b>	<b>Territory</b>	<b>Attend in person</b>	<b>Attend by phone</b>
Karim Hodge	Anguilla	Yes	
Samia Sarkis	Bermuda	Yes	
Kelvin Penn Angela Burnett Penn Mervin Hastings	British Virgin Islands		Yes
Mat Cottam	Cayman Islands	Yes	
Nick Rendell	Falklands	Yes	
Andy McCutcheon	Guernsey	Yes	
Liz Charter	Isle of Man		Yes
John Pinel	Jersey	Yes	
Tara Pelembe Isabel Peters Nikki Chapman	St Helena		Yes
Richard McKee	South Georgia & South Sandwich Islands		Yes
<b>Other participants</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Attend in person</b>	<b>Attend by phone</b>
Eric Blencowe	Defra	Yes	
Heather Christie	Foreign and Commonwealth Office		Yes
Colin Clubbe	Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew	Yes	
Ken Norris Katherine Booth Jones	University of Reading	Yes	
Tony Weighell	JNCC	Yes	
Elizabeth Moore	JNCC	Yes	
John Henson Webb	JNCC	Yes	
Tighe Geoghegan	Green Park Consultants (Meeting Facilitator)	Yes	

## Annex 2: Agenda of Meeting

### Day 1: 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012: Chair Mat Cottam, Cayman Islands

Time	Activity	Format
09:00 - 09:30	Arrival	
09:30-10:30	<i>Introductions and outline of the workshop aims and objectives (Tony Weighell, JNCC)</i>	Round table introductions and brief explanation (15 mins)
	<i>Display &amp; explanation of zero draft (Elizabeth Moore, JNCC)</i>	Display (10 mins)
	<b>Overall comments</b> <b>Are we happy to move forward with these objectives?</b> (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	Discussion (20 mins)
	<i>FCO – OT White Paper &amp; Strategy (Heather Windle, FCO)</i>	Brief synopsis and discussion (10 mins)
10:30 – 10:45	<b>Coffee break</b>	
10:45 – 12:15	<i>Defra – setting the perspective; Darwin funding &amp; challenge fund (Eric Blencowe, Defra)</i>	Brief synopsis and discussion (10 mins)
	<b>What should we do over the next 3 years?</b> <b>Obj 5: Implementation of research priorities</b> (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	plenary discussion (30 mins)
	<i>Univ of Reading – Outputs from MOU (Katherine Booth Jones, Univ of Reading)</i>	Brief synopsis and discussion (10 mins)
	<b>What should we do over the next 3 years?</b> <b>Obj 4: Collaboration with tertiary education facilities in the OTs and in OT regions</b> (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	plenary discussion (30 mins)
	<i>RBG Kew – student workshop 2012 (Colin Clubeb, RBG Kew)</i>	Brief synopsis and discussion (10 mins)
12:15 - 13:15	<b>Lunch</b>	
13:15 - 14:45	<b>What should we do over the next 3 years?</b> <b>Obj 3: Activities to enhance knowledge transfer between OTs</b> (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	plenary discussion (45 mins)
	<b>What should we do over the next 3 years?</b> <b>Obj 2: Access to UK-based research and advisory expertise</b> (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	plenary discussion (45 mins)
14:45 - 15:00	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
15:00 - 16:00	<b>What should we do over the next 3 years?</b> <b>Obj 1: Training and capacity building for individuals and organisations in the OTs/CDs</b> (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	Discussion (45 mins)

	Feedback and summary of day (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	Summary of outputs of the day and where we go tomorrow
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## Day 2: 26<sup>th</sup> January 2012: Chair Nick Rendell, Falkland Islands

Time	Activity	Format
09:00-09:30	<b>Arrival and coffee</b>	
09:30-10:30	<i>Circulation of copies of day 1 draft</i>	Discussion, amendments/clarification (10 mins)
	<i>Go through comments from remote participants</i>	Plenary discussion, amend spreadsheet or raise queries (50 mins)
10:30 – 11:00	<b>Coffee break</b>	
11:00 – 12:30	<i>Prioritisation and resources required (human skills, technical etc)</i> (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	Prioritisation of actions + attempts at identifying key resources (90 mins)
12:30- 13:30	<b>Lunch</b>	
13:30 - 14:00	Introductions and recap on outcomes of yesterday and this morning	Linking in remote participants and introducing them
14:00- 16:00	<b>What should we do over the next 3 years and what are the priority actions?</b> <b>Overall comments</b> (Tighe Geoghegan, facilitator)	Discussion (20 mins)
	<b>Obj 1: Training and capacity building for individuals and organisations in the OTs</b>	Discussion (20 mins)
	<b>Obj 2: Access to UK-based research and advisory expertise</b>	Discussion 20 mins)
	<b>Obj 3: Activities to enhance knowledge transfer between OTs</b>	Discussion (20 mins)
	<b>Obj 4: Collaboration with tertiary education facilities in the OTs and in OT regions</b>	Discussion (20 mins)
	<b>Obj 5: Implementation of research priorities</b>	Discussion (20 mins)
16:00-16:45	Membership of OT and CD Steering Group (Tony Weighell, JNCC)	Discussion (45 mins)
16:45-17:00	Feedback and summary of day + forward look. (Tony Weighell, JNCC)	Summary of outputs of the day and what happens from here.