

**Minutes of the 13th Meeting of the UK Biodiversity
Research Advisory Group
9th July 2009**

**Held at Defra offices, Room 631 Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR
Telephone (Nobel House Switchboard) 020 7270 8080**

In attendance; Peter Costigan, Defra (Chair)
Tina Yates, JNCC (Secretariat).
Ian Bainbridge, SNH
Helen Baker, JNCC
Andy Brown, NE
Joanna Drewitt, Scottish Government
Richard Evans, Welsh Assembly Government
Mike Fay, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew
Mary Gibby, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh
Andrew Impey, NERC
David McCracken, SAC
Amanda Read, BBSRC
Paul Rose, JNCC
Mark Spencer, Natural History Museum
Mark Stevenson, Defra (am only)
Andy Swash, Defra
Alan Watt, CEH
Kevin Watts, Forest Research
Tony Weighell, JNCC, Speaker, am only.

Apologies; Michel Kaiser, University of Bangor; Andrew Pullin, BES; David McDonald, University of Oxford; Ken Norris, NERC Biodiversity Thematic Leader; Sallie Bailey, Forestry Commission; Tim Blackstock, CCW; Richard Brand-Hardy, Defra; Liz Charter, Isle of Man; Mike Freeman, Jersey, Steve Smith, Guernsey; Roland Gauvain, Alderney Wildlife Trust

13.1 Welcome and introductions

Newcomers to BRAG were welcomed and introductions made.

13.2 BES/BRAG Autumn Event update

TY outlined the plans for the joint BES-BRAG event, to be held on 9th September at the University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield. The event will focus on the National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA). Information on the session prior to the meeting should emphasise that the event is a good way of feeding into the NEA.

As the Countryside Survey (CS) Integrated Assessment will be at the same meeting, it was pointed out that that timetabling needs to ensure that the CS session does not clash with the BES-BRAG session, and that, as the two are complementary, the ideal would be to have them on the same day.

Action: TY to liaise with Ceri Margerison of the BES over timetabling of the CS session.

13.3. GBSC report back.

Papers BRAG 13/1 and BRAG 13/2

13.3.1 The minutes and activities of the [GBSC](#) (Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee) are now on the JNCC web site. The next meeting is to be Monday 13th July and will focus on Earth Observation. Also on the agenda are the outcomes from the 20th May JNCC meeting of the MEA; Global biodiversity mechanisms; a thematic review of recent developments and future evidence needs (see paper BRAG 13/1) and the May 2009 meeting of EPBRS on Taxonomy (see paper BRAG 13/2). Issues for future GBSC meetings are the global decline of amphibians, and nanotechnology. GBSC will take briefings on these and any further topics that come to its attention, and then will decide how to follow up in the coming year.

Action: TY to put [link to new GBSC web site](#) onto BRAG web site.

13.3.2 Governance of GBSC has recently been discussed and a GBSC advisory note submitted to GECC (Global Environmental Change Committee), which is still considering how to operate in future. The report of the GECC review is available from Defra.

Action: TY put link to GECC review report onto BRAG website (the review is not yet publicly available, but a link will be put on the BRAG website as soon as the review is made public) The [GECC web site](#) is hosted by Defra.

13.4 IPBES and EPBRS

Papers BRAG 13/2, BRAG 13/3

13.4.1 The Chair summarised the role of [EPBRS](#) (European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy) and the proposed IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services), which is being modelled on the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

13.4.2 The EPBRS meeting in May, on Taxonomy, which was preceded by an e-conference, was attended by Mary Gibby (see paper BRAG 13/2). It produced six recommendations, all of which are relevant to BRAG. The thrust of the meeting was the need to protect the breadth of biodiversity across all taxonomic groups. The challenge is not just looking at the taxonomy, but at the ecosystem function of taxonomic groups, and this is where there are knowledge gaps. Identifying function is linked to assessing how adaptation to change may happen, so taking an ecosystem approach to taxonomy is useful in flagging up this sort of knowledge gap. A question for the future is how to identify what groups of species are ecosystem drivers. An example is how wolves in Yellowstone National Park in the USA affect tree regeneration because wolf predation affects cervid (deer) behaviour.

- 13.4.3 There was also an EPBRS workshop in May on a Network of Knowledge (NoK; ref paper BRAG 13/3). The May workshop examined dissemination of knowledge, what the potential barriers to knowledge dissemination might be, and how organisations could input ideas and information. The report of the meeting is not yet complete, but will be circulated as soon as received by the BRAG Secretariat. It was commented that the NoK is a fundamentally different approach from the draft IPBES, with far more local consideration of issues. Allan Watt stated that the NoK was intended to contribute to the debate on IPBES and any EU-level approach.
- 13.4.4 The second meeting to consider IPBES, to be held in Nairobi in October, will also consider knowledge dissemination. See [the IPBES web site](#) for further information as it becomes available. The WCMC (World Conservation Monitoring Centre) will be doing a gap analysis before this October meeting. Under consideration will be what model to follow with IPBES; whether to model it on the IPCC or whether to follow a network of knowledge route. Also being considered will be the need for IPBES, its role and function across the world, and the role of Europe within it, and how to aggregate information from both global and European bases. It is not clear at the moment how BRAG can feed into IPBES, but it is good that a couple of BRAG members are individually involved. If a network of knowledge route is followed, the BRAG will probably be more involved in the future, for its knowledge base.
- 13.4.5 EPBRS will next be meeting in Gotland, under the Swedish Presidency of the EU. The theme of the meeting will be Targets for biodiversity beyond 2010 and research supporting policy. It will be preceded by an e-conference, which will be chaired by Peter Bridgewater. BRAG agreed that it would be valuable for members to make contributions to the e-conference, including 'key notes'. The EPBRS strategy is being reviewed at a focus group meeting on 6/7th August, which Helen Baker and Allan Watt will be attending.

Action: Allan Watt to ensure that TY receives details of the EPBRS Swedish meeting e-conference for circulation.

Action: Helen Baker to circulate, via TY, information from the EPBRS research strategy review focus group meeting in August, once it becomes available.

13.5 BRIG-BRAG workshop follow up.

Paper BRAG 13/5

Helen Baker gave a short introduction explaining the background to the workshop, which had been attended by around 40 experts in their fields. There are a number of issues around how to do research on species and groups of species, and there are recommendations in the paper BRAG 13/5. The need is to identify cross cutting issues with specific research needs; these are then more likely to be picked up by research funders. BRIG is already considering research recommendations relating to single species actions, and a BRAG sub-group could usefully consider the groupings in the workshop report and then have a dialogue with BRIG members. It was noted that country-level groups are also doing these kinds of analyses and that it would be worthwhile to engage with them. It was suggested that a further project to finalise the analysis started by the workshop would be beneficial, and that this should be a joint

BRIG/BRAG activity. It was suggested that in developing criteria that the SNH Species Framework approach might provide useful insights.

Action: Helen Baker to convene a meeting of the sub-group (Paul Rose, Andy Brown, Kevin Watts, Ian Bainbridge, Mark Stevenson, Mark Spencer, Tim Blackstock, Mike Kaiser and Andrew Pullin).

13.6 Crown Dependencies - Presentation by Tony Weighell from JNCC

13.6.1 The Crown Dependencies (CDs) are Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey, also including Alderney and Sark islands, and the presentation showed which had signed up to the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, as well as describing the issues for Crown Dependencies and the work that JNCC is doing with them.

13.6.2 Many of the issues are capacity limited, in that both personnel time and money are constraints on the work that can be done. Although there is some money that the CDs can tap into, they are islands with small populations and limited personnel, and priorities for what money is available can be an issue. JNCC is building up a network of contacts within the CDs that BRAG can feed into. The CDs are islands and many of their issues can translate to other islands, e.g. in Scotland. Island biodiversity may be an issue that BRAG will wish to address in the future. In terms of island biodiversity, marine issues become a proportionately higher priority, but for the CDs the difficulty with limited resources is how to enforce any measures they would wish to take.

13.6.3 JNCC is establishing research links between the Overseas Territories (OTs), CDs and some Universities. BRAG can foster further links and networking, but it is also important to establish what the CDs would like from BRAG.

Action: CD representatives on BRAG requested to consider how BRAG might contribute to their work and send comments to TY prior to the December 2009 meeting

13.7 Ground level ozone

Paper: BRAG 13/4

13.7.1 The environmental impact of ground level ozone is an emerging issue. The [Royal Society Science Policy Report 15](#) (2008), 'Ground-level ozone in the 21st century future trends, impacts and policy implications', is an interesting report that BRAG members should be encouraged to read and disseminate. It is a topic that UK delegates to EPBRs should be encouraged to submit as an issue.

13.7.2 The National Expert Group on Transboundary Air Pollution is currently drafting a Review of Transboundary Air Pollution (RoTAP) and the draft report will be out for consultation during summer 2009.

Action: TY inform BRAG members when the RoTAP report goes out for consultation.

Action: TY / HB / PC look at RoTAP report and see if it is feasible to make a BRAG response within the deadline, or whether it is better for members to comment individually.

13.7.3 Ground level ozone is a critical issue that is not being looked at by devolved governments, although in theory it is easier to address than climate change. A

presentation on the topic by Prof. David Fowler will soon be on the [GBSC web site](#).

13.8 House of Lords systematics and taxonomy follow up. Paper:BRAG 12/4c

13.8.1 One of the recommendations (see paper BRAG 12/4c para 7.16) refers to DNA bar-coding, which Mary Gibby took forward via a workshop that included organisations across the UK, as well as a representative from the Netherlands. The group at the workshop agreed to take the following issues forward;

- Gap analysis
- How to identify and share existing information
- Look at the quality of existing data
- Gap analysis
- Identify actions needed
- Liaise with user groups and within Europe
- Make information accessible
- Identify funding

At the August 2010 mycological conference in Edinburgh DNA bar-coding will be a topic.

Action: Mary Gibby to send a summary of this Edinburgh meeting to TY for circulation to BRAG for information.

13.8.2 When it comes to identifying funding, possibilities include applying for responsive mode funding from either BBSRC or NERC, or looking at a BBSRC knowledge exchange schemes funding.

Action: Andrew Impey to send Mary Gibby information on responsive mode funding in NERC, Amanda Read to send information on responsive mode funding in BBSRC.

The group thanked Mary Gibby for her extensive work on this topic over the last 6 months, which has substantially answered the House of Lords recommendation.

13.8.3 With reference to paragraph 7.20 of the House of Lords report (see paper BRAG 12/4c, para. 7.20) the Bryophyte and Lichen societies are already doing work within their specific societies. The Swedish Government has also funded researchers to publish popular field guides, which are then sent out to schools. Norway is looking at following this model. The difficulty in the UK is identifying what field guides are already available. The Angela Marmont Centre at the Darwin Museum of the Natural History Museum, will be opening in spring of 2010, and will have a comprehensive library and resource centre – potentially identifying gaps in simple, comprehensive field guides could be a role for the Darwin Museum and the Angela Marmont Centre. The first knowledge gap is in identifying and making accessible existing knowledge, and then publicising where there are needs for further work.

13.8.4 Para 7.12 of the House of Lords report (see paper BRAG 12/4c para 7.12) asks BBSRC and NERC to fund a “roadmap” for the delivery of internet-based taxonomy. BBSRC had their first meeting in June, and intend to have a consultation document out by the autumn, with the intention of having actioned the House of Lords recommendation by early 2010. NERC have their first meeting, which will be with the Natural History Museum, in the week of 13th July 2009.

Action: Andrew Impey to feed back on the NERC meeting to Mary Gibby.

13.8.5 It was decided to form a BRAG sub-group to look at identifying which are the best current field guides, and how new technology could be used to make them more accessible in the field, e.g. via mobile phones. Identifying the technology and then driving development is likely to need funding, so the sub-group will look at what might be available.

Action: TY and Mary Gibby to organise a meeting of sub-group for mid-October. Members to be Ian Bainbridge, Andrew Impey, Mark Spencer, Tim Blackstock, Andy Swash and delegates from the Field Studies Council and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN).

13.9 Natural Capital Initiative (NCI)

13.9.1 Allan Watt gave an oral report. NCI is a joint initiative between the Institute of Biology (IoB), CEH (NERC's Centre for Ecology and Hydrology), the Science Council and the BES. Rosie Hails from CEH is playing a major role. The initiative is to foster constructive discussion as to how Natural Capital nationally can best be utilised sustainably, with an emphasis on understanding the value of all the services the environment provides. Recent symposia have been held on 'Valuing our life support systems' and 'Sustainable Cities'. See <http://www.naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk/> for further information.

Action: Allan Watt to send TY draft reports of symposia for circulation when available.

13.9.2 The future of NCI is being debated within various other groups that consider ecosystem services, including the NEA (National Ecosystem Assessment), IPBES, and TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity – an EU initiative, see http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/economics/index_en.htm). There is agreement that NCI has a role as a forum to bring people together, as it is less time limited than, for example, TEEB and the NEA. The NCI title also gives the ecosystem approach a different perspective. There is a need to ensure that the NCI is complementary to other organisations, with a coherence of language and understanding. Questions being asked are whether NCI should be identifying gaps in science and linking with BRAG and LWEC, and also how much the NCI should be about engaging with public, non-scientific groups, and inspiring educational curricula.

13.10 Potential paper for Journal of Applied Ecology

The Journal of Applied Ecology would be interested to see a paper based on the BRAG Research Needs report, although they make no commitment to publish.

Action: TY liaise with David McCracken in the 2nd half of August, to take this further.

13.11 Biodiversity Partnership Conference

The draft agenda was circulated as paper BRAG 13/7 for information. The conference is to be held on 7th and 8th October at the University of York. It was noted that the agenda didn't cover ecosystem valuation very well; Paul Rose agreed to feedback to the organising committee.

Action: Paul Rose to liaise with Joanna Drewitt about any further topics for the agenda

to be raised with the Biodiversity Partnership Conference organising committee.

13.12 The way forward for BRAG

13.12.1 BRAG Annual Report

A draft report had been included in the papers for the meeting as BRAG 13/6.

Comments were invited, and suggestions were;

- that mention of the BES-BRAG events also include mention of the event held in 2007
- that wording in the introduction of BRAG being the UK Biodiversity Research Platform be changed slightly to more strongly emphasise the role that BRAG plays
- that some sort of table of outputs be included.

Overall, subject to these suggestions, the meeting was happy that the report be finalised. The aim is to have it available at the BES-BRAG event on September 9th.

Action: Allan Watt to send suggestion for wording the annual report introduction to better reflect BRAG's role and association with EPBRs.

13.12.2 Future Priorities

Priorities were identified as;

- a. Knowledge gaps arising from the Ecosystem Approach. There is a tendency to focus on what is already known or accessible, rather than (for example) groups like soil microbia where little is known. Because the Ecosystem Approach focuses on function it becomes possible to think more about groups of species where little is already known.
- b. Microbial Conservation.
- c. The scope of needed systematic reviews is being assessed by LWEC, funded by Defra. These should be followed up, when the current drafts are made public.
Action: PC send drafts to TY for publicising once they are available.
- d. Research on the science/policy interface. An effective procedure is needed to develop interaction between research evidence, identified research gaps where there are evidence needs, and policy. This is a topic on the IPBES agenda, so BRAG should further their engagement with IPBES in future.
- e. Target-driven biodiversity conservation. Examination of how different types of research are used, and targets set. For example comparisons of using indicators, monitoring, and other types of research.
- f. Island issues. A review of UK island biodiversity issues would be timely and useful, as would a check to see if the UK is fulfilling its commitments to the CBD. This should involve liaising with the Crown Dependencies, as well as looking at other UK Islands.
- g. Look at how BRAG better engages with other organisations such as the interagency groups (LCNs – Lead Coordination Networks) many of which have a secretariat hosted by JNCC. Drawing in members of different organisations for specialist sub-groups is seen as a very useful way of engaging with other organisations.

Action: TY make contact with LCN reps. to see how communications between the LCNs and BRAG can be developed. Enquire about the review of the LCNs being led by Richard Ferris and Andy Stott, JNCC.

- h. Social issues and science / policy interactions, looking at incentives to protect biodiversity.
- i. Nanotechnology.
Action: HB circulate GBSC paper on nanotechnology.
Action: Andrew Impey report back on nanotechnology meeting being held at the same time (9th July 09) as the BRAG meeting.

Action: TY, HB and PC draft a paper on future BRAG priorities, circulate for comment and seek to present to December 2009 meeting.

13.13 Minutes of the last meeting

All actions were either completed or in progress. Further to action 12.5.2, which refers to the paper 'Future novel threats and opportunities facing UK biodiversity identified by horizon scanning' (Sutherland *et al*, (2008) Journal of Applied Ecology), Sutherland *et al* have since published a further paper.

Action: HB to circulate latest paper on global biodiversity issues from Sutherland *et al*.

13.14 Standing item – any opportunities (timelines with key decision points) to inform and influence funders.

13.14.1 There is a call out via LWEC for expressions of interest in research aimed at understanding and mitigating the biological and environmental factors that adversely affect insect pollinators. See <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/programmes/lwec/events/insect.asp> for further information.

Action: Andrew Impey to send TY any other information on this call.

13.14.2 The Scottish Government is now developing ideas for a Research Strategy for 2011-2016 and will be holding workshops at the end of the year.

Action: Joanna Drewitt to keep TY informed

13.14.3 Defra is developing a new evidence investment strategy at the moment. Between July and December Defra is also working on a forward strategy, with plans for stakeholder meetings later in 2009.

13.15 Any other business.

13.15.1 TY raised the question of developing the BRAG web site. Discussion centred around who the targeted audience is: BRAG members; Country level users, for example the BAP community; and the academic community. The web site would be useful as a vehicle that

better publicises evidence and research needs, so that it can be more readily used by researchers working up funding bids at a national level.

13.15.2 The issue of separation of the web site from the UK Biodiversity Web site was also raised. On its own the BRAG web site is easier to find, but the UK Biodiversity Web site is undergoing rationalisation so it may be timely to investigate if the BRAG web site should move.

13.15.3 There could be better links between different organisations' web site and BRAG – e.g. between NERC's site and BRAG's.

Actions: TY investigate visitor statistics to the BRAG web site, to investigate who is using the site.

TY talk to Paul Rose about the changes to the UK Biodiversity Web site.

TY investigate links between web sites.

13.15.4 With reference to the web site www.knowledgescotland.org there are a number of drop in events for discussion and engagement, which are worth investigating by BRAG members.

13.15.5 For information, SNH has a new corporate strategy looking forward to 2013. Ian Bainbridge informed the group that he is working on a science strategy for SNH that will tie in with the corporate strategy. There is a current consultation on 'Action for Scotland's Habitats'.

Action: Ian Bainbridge to provide TY with information for circulation.

Date and venue for next meeting: The next meeting will be held in Edinburgh, on Tuesday, 8th December, at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh.

Summary of Actions from the 13th meeting of BRAG, 9th July 2009

Reference in minutes	Description	Action
13.2	TY to liaise with Ceri Margerison of the BES over timetabling of the Countryside Survey session at the BES meeting in September, to move the session before the joint BES-BRAG event.	TY
13.3.1	TY to put link to new GBSC web site onto BRAG web site.	TY
13.3.2	TY put link to GECC review report onto BRAG website (the review is not yet publicly available, but a link will be put on the BRAG website as soon as the review is made public)	TY
13.4.5	With reference to the next EPBRS conference to be held in Gotland, Allan Watt to ensure that TY receives details of the preceding e-conference for circulation.	Allan Watt , then TY to circulate
13.4.5	With reference to the EPBRS focus group, reviewing the EPBRS strategy at a meeting on 6 th & 7 th August, Helen Baker to circulate, via TY, information from the focus group meeting, once it becomes available.	Helen Baker & TY
13.5	TY and Helen Baker organise and convene a meeting of the sub-group, to follow up on the joint BRIG-BRAG meeting on Mechanisms for filling knowledge gaps for the Biodiversity Action Plan. The sub group's role initially will be in aggregating groupings and signposting funding possibilities.	Sub-group to be Helen Baker, Paul Rose, Andy Brown, Kevin Watts, Ian Bainbridge, Mark Stevenson, Mark Spencer, Tim Blackstock, Mike Kaiser and Andrew Pullin.
13.6.3	CD representatives on BRAG mailing list requested to consider how BRAG might contribute to their work and send comments to TY prior to the December 2009 meeting	Liz Charter , Isle of Man; Mike Freeman , Jersey, Steve Smith , Guernsey; Roland Gauvain , Alderney Wildlife Trust

13.7.2	TY inform BRAG members when the RoTAP report goes out for consultation.	TY	
13.7.2	TY / HB / PC look at RoTAP report and see if it is feasible to make a joint BRAG response within the deadline, or whether it is better for members to comment individually	TY / Helen Baker / Peter Costigan	
13.8.1	Mary Gibby to send a summary of the August mycological meeting in Edinburgh to TY for circulation to BRAG for information.	Mary Gibby	
13.8.2	Andrew Impey to send Mary Gibby information on responsive mode funding in NERC, Amanda Read to send information on responsive mode funding in BBSRC.	Andrew Impey, Amanda Read	
13.8.4	Andrew Impey to feed back to Mary Gibby about NERC's first 'roadmap' meeting looking at internet based taxonomy.	Andrew Impey, Mary Gibby	
13.8.5	TY and Mary Gibby organise meeting of sub-group on the subject of field guides, for mid-October. Members to be Ian Bainbridge, Andrew Impey, Mark Spencer, Tim Blackstock, Andy Swash and delegates from the field studies council and the National Biodiversity Network (NBN). Mary Gibby to lead on the topic.	TY and Mary Gibby, with Ian Bainbridge, Andrew Impey, Mark Spencer, Tim Blackstock, Andy Swash	
13.9.1	Allan Watt to send TY draft reports of NCI symposia for circulation when available.	Allan Watt	
13.9.1	TY to put web site link in minutes http://www.naturalcapitalinitiative.org.uk/	TY	
13.10	TY liaise with David McCracken in the 2 nd half of August, re potential paper for the Journal of Applied Ecology	TY and David McCracken	
13.11	Paul Rose to liaise with Joanna Drewitt about any further topics for the agenda of the Biodiversity Partnership conference, for him to raise with the organising committee.	Paul Rose, Joanna Drewitt	

13.12.1	Allan Watt send suggestion for wording in the introduction of the BRAG report, that better reflects BRAG's role and association with EPBRs.	Allan Watt	
13.12.2c	Peter Costigan send drafts of the Defra funded Systematic Reviews being done via LWEC to TY for publicising once they are available.	Peter Costigan	
13.12.2g	TY make contact with LCN reps. to see how communications between the LCNs and BRAG can be developed. Enquire about the review of the LCNs being led by Richard Ferris and Andy Stott.	TY	
13.12.2i	Helen Baker circulate GBSC paper on nanotechnology.	Helen Baker	
13.12.2i	Andrew Impey report back on nanotechnology meeting being held at the same time (9 th July 09) as the BRAG meeting.	Andrew Impey	
13.12.2	TY, Helen Baker and Peter Costigan draft a paper of future BRAG priorities.	TY, Helen Baker and Peter Costigan	
13.13	Helen Baker to circulate latest paper from Sutherland <i>et al.</i>	Helen Baker	
13.14	Andrew Impey to send TY any other information (further to the web site information) on the current call via LWEC for expressions of interest in research aimed at understanding and mitigating the biological and environmental factors that adversely affect insect pollinators.	Andrew Impey	
13.15.3	TY investigate visitor statistics to the BRAG web site, to investigate who is using the site.	TY	
13.15.3	TY talk to Paul Rose about the changes to the UK Biodiversity Web site.	TY	
13.15.3	TY investigate links between web sites	TY	
13.15.5	Ian Bainbridge to provide TY with information for circulation on the consultation on 'Action for Scotland's Habitats' and on SNH's Science Strategy, when available.	Ian Bainbridge	