

# **UK Overseas Territories Biodiversity Conservation Training and Research Programme Steering Group**

Minutes  
Meeting 1  
26 January 2009

## **Attendees:**

Tara Pelembe, JNCC (Chair)  
Ken Norris, University of Reading  
Elizabeth Moore, JNCC (Secretariat)  
Kimberly Durrant, UKOTA  
Samia Sarkis, Bermuda  
Ian Davidson-Watts, SBA Cyprus  
Karim Hodge, Anguilla (joined from agenda item 4)  
Nikki Chapman (joined for agenda item 5)

## **Apologies:**

Ascension, Rob Bowman, British Antarctic Territory, Lynda Varlac, British Virgin Islands, Gina Ebanks-Petrie, Cayman, Gerard Gray, Montserrat, Jay Warren, Pitcairn, Isabel Peters, St Helena, Darren Christie, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, Wesley Cleveaux, Turks and Caicos Islands.

## **Introductions**

Tara Pelembe welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Steering Group (SG) and asked attendees to introduce themselves. Unfortunately it was not possible to connect a number of representatives via telephone conference due to technical difficulties. It was noted that in the future the Secretariat will take measures to ensure the meetings run more smoothly.

### **1. Terms of Reference (ToR)**

Elizabeth Moore noted that the draft ToR had been circulated to the SG and that these are intended to provide a framework for the group to work within, but can be modified over time if the need arises. Members were asked if they had any concerns about the ToR. Samia Sarkis noted that in the Performance Measures section the second bullet states "... knowledge transfer, including science to policy..." but that issues on island often relate more to management. Ian Davidson-Watts agreed that social research aspects would be as important as ecological research.

Tara Pelembe noted that the idea of the programme and SG was to create a vehicle and process to address the training and research needs of the OTs. Ken Norris added that in the future the science behind the programme needs to be turned into something relevant and useful for the territories. The starting point for the programme was to consider the information needs of the OTs.

The SG expressed that they were content with the ToR as they stand, with the option to revise them in the future if the need arises.

## **2. Membership**

Elizabeth Moore noted that the aim of the SG is to provide a forum to lead the training and research programme. It is intended that the OT's will run the SG and steer the programme in the way that best meets their needs. Therefore membership is focused on representatives from the OTs. The JNCC's role will be to provide initial Chair and Secretariat support and Reading University represents links to the UK wider academic community. In the future, it is envisaged that additional members can be considered for specific pieces of work or time periods. Members expressed that they were content with the membership of the SG.

## **3. Nomination of Vice-Chair**

The intention is for an OT representative to take over the role of Chair. Elizabeth asked whether anyone had a particular interest in taking over the role of Chair of the SG. Ian Davidson-Watts suggested that if there were a number of people interested the role of Chair could rotate between OTs over a period of time. Elizabeth asked for all members to send in nominations for Chair by 31 March.

**ACTION 3/1: All members** to send in nominations for Chair of the SG to Elizabeth Moore by 31 March 2009.

## **4. Programme concept**

The concept note had been circulated and OT's had previously been consulted on the document. Ken Norris noted that the driver behind the programme was to provide an umbrella framework for people with expertise to engage with the OTs to address problems in conservation science where there are gaps or evidence needs. Four broad areas were identified to take forward this concept:

- Studentships to increase conservation capacity within the territories
- Facilitating engagement with UK higher education expertise
- Activities to enhance knowledge exchange cross territory and with the UK
- Collaboration with OT research bodies

Fundamental to this concept is that the OTs drive what is important to them, hence the establishment of the SG. Ken noted that unfortunately the NERC knowledge exchange grant bid in 2008 had not been successful. It was likely that NERC was looking for projects with clearer ideas in science with benefits to the users in specific ways and this is slightly different from the OT programme concept. There are other funding options which can be explored, for example OTEP and the Darwin Initiative.

Kimberly Durrant noted that the JNCC has recently contributed £66,000 (GBP) funding to cover a 3-year undergraduate studentship in Biodiversity Conservation at the University of Reading to commence in September 2009. UKOTA will manage the funds which will cover the fees, expenditure and a number of trips back to the OT. UKOTA will advertise the opportunity in all the OTs in early February. A selection panel including representatives from the JNCC, Reading University and UKOTA will meet in May to decide which candidate will be offered the place.

The studentship opportunity was welcomed by the SG as a great opportunity.

## 5. Next steps

Discussion about the next steps for taking forward the programme concept continued from the previous agenda item. Samia Sarkis noted that in addition to the studentship opportunity it would be useful to have an audit across all the territories of the current programmes and research activities, and the skills available. This would enhance knowledge transfer and be a valuable baseline to identify gaps and future priorities. Ken Norris agreed particularly with the emphasis on cross territory links. Ian Davidson-Watts was keen to maximise resources and agreed that such an audit would be useful in terms of cross-territory skill share and cohesion.

**ACTION 5/1: JNCC** to discuss plan for audit across the OTs with **Samia Sarkis** by 4 February.

Samia Sarkis noted that in Bermuda they have worked with Masters students who undertake fieldwork. This model is successful, but they are looking for additional students. Ken Norris suggested that it might be possible to identify potential UK Masters students, however he would require a clear idea of what the specific need is and what timeframe they are working towards.

**ACTION 5/2: Samia Sarkis** (and other OTs if desired) to identify potentially suitable projects for Masters students to undertake fieldwork and send this information to Ken Norris by 27 February. Details should include aims, objects and description of the project, location and timeframe for the fieldwork and an indication of any cost implications for the student.

Karim Hodge asked about opportunities for linking into tertiary education authorities in other OTs. He noted that Anguilla is just starting to establish a Community College and felt that this is a bit behind some of the other OTs. Karim would be keen to get a good nature conservation course on the college programme. Samia Sarkis noted that Bermuda college is not well focused on nature conservation and that lots of students do fieldwork in Bermuda but write up their research elsewhere. Ken Norris noted that part of the programme is to use UK higher education expertise to develop tertiary education in the OTs if required.

Ian Davidson-Watts noted that the SBA on Cyprus is not a typical government sector and has a different set-up from the other OTs.

Nikki Chapman joined the meeting and was introduced as JNCC's OT funding officer. Nikki's role is to look for funding specifically for the OTs, and she has a one year contract which is funded by DfID. There are two main strands to Nikki's work:

- (i). Explore existing funding opportunities available for UK OTs and try to get new sources. This will include collating the information onto a database which will be available on the internet and a report, both of which should be completed by May 2009.
- (ii). Support the OTs with funding applications.

Nikki is setting up a steering group of government representatives and users and is currently looking at database design and researching existing funding sources. If anyone knows of existing of potential funding sources please contact Nikki Chapman<sup>1</sup>.

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Ian Davidson-Watts noted that as Cyprus is an atypical territory it would be best to have an offline discussion with Nikki

**ACTION 5/3: Nikki Chapman** to follow up discussion on funding opportunities and needs with Ian Davidson-Watts by 19 February.

## **6. Allocation of small contribution to biodiversity research**

Tara Pelembe announced that the JNCC has two sums of £3,000 (GBP) available for biodiversity research in the OTs, although if there was one project for a larger amount it may be possible to work up the parameters for this. The funds need to be contributed to the OT by mid March 2009, so there is not much time for requests for contributions. It was agreed that JNCC would circulate a (one-side of A4) project form to the SG (attached) and anyone who would like to submit a request needs to complete this and return it to Tara Pelembe by 11 February. In the event that the applications exceed the amount available the SG will be asked to rank the applications, awarding proposals a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> preference. It is likely that this will need to be done in a very short timeframe, probably one week, to be completed by 20 February. A final decision will be made by the JNCC and announced by end February.

**ACTION 6/1: JNCC** to circulate project form to members of the SG by 30 January. **Members** wishing to apply for the grant need to complete the forms and return them to JNCC by 11 February. **Members** may be invited to vote for their preference of projects during week commencing 16 February. **Members** need to submit all votes to JNCC by 20 February.

Ken Norris suggested that members could consider using the £3,000 (GBP) to work up a project specification for a much larger project bid and explained that the University of Reading have recently been involved in such a project with the Falkland Islands. Samia Sarkis agreed that it would be useful to have a partner to assist with project proposals and noted that she is involved in a number of research proposals. She asked whether there was any facility at Reading for training in environmental impact assessment. Ken Norris noted that Reading is more involved in the fundamental research of biodiversity risk rather than actual assessments for specific projects. Ian Davidson-Watts highlighted that his department has expertise in EIA's that they were happy to share with other OTs as required. Tara Pelembe has details of an organisation who is willing to do EIA training in the OTs. For more information contact Tara<sup>2</sup>.

## **7. AOB**

No issues were raised under this agenda item.

## **8. Date of next meeting**

Tara Pelembe noted that it may be opportune to hold the next meeting of the SG in the margins of the OT Conference in Cayman in May.

**ACTION 8/1: Secretariat** to find out how many SG members are attending the OT Conference in May and discuss the possibility of holding the next meeting at that time. **Secretariat** to circulate details of the next SG meeting to members by 27 February.

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