

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

Summary outcomes from the 12th Meeting of the UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group

February 2009

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Summary outcomes from the 12th Meeting of The UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group (9th Dec 2008; Environment Centre Wales, Bangor)

UK Overseas Territories/Crown Dependencies research

A JNCC paper summarising the outcomes of a workshop designed to explore research priorities was circulated and discussed. BRAG agreed that it should explore the legal and policy framework in the UK Crown Dependencies, and agree a way to identify research needs in this context: the JNCC Overseas Territories Officer will be invited to make a presentation to the June 2009 meeting. BRAG will decide on the benefits of undertaking an 'islands' research review at that meeting.

UK BRAG collaboration with the British Ecological Society

Outcomes from the joint BES/BRAG session at the 2008 BES annual meeting on Ecosystem Services had been published on the BRAG website. BRAG agreed that it would be worthwhile collaborating in this way again and several suggestions were made for subjects in 2009; landscape ecology might be timely. A small sub-group agreed to meet with BES in Feb 2009 to develop and finalise a theme.

Horizon scanning

Nanotechnology was considered the highest priority of the emerging threats. Both NERC and EPSRC have nano-science programs, and EPSRC has recognised that collaboration is needed to account for environmental aspects. BRAG recognised that it needed to liaise closely with LWEC to ensure that its complementary role in dealing with novel threats was well informed.

Policy/Research Barriers Sub-group

Two key issues were discussed; outcome of the BAP research needs process (see below) and the relevance of the Sutherland *et al.* '100 questions'¹ in policy terms. BRAG agreed that the subgroup should consider the merits of a review of these information sources in the context of socio-economic drivers, and if appropriate develop a specification.

BRIG – BRAG workshop on BAP species research needs

A workshop was held 4/5 December 2008 to prioritise species research and one-off survey needs from the BAP review. Attendees validated the criteria for prioritising actions, undertook prioritisation for their taxonomic groups, and assigned meaningful groupings. A final report should be available in late January 2009, which will then be sent to BRAG for consideration of grouped research needs: BRAG agreed to establish a sub-group to develop advice to UKSC.

House of Lords report on Systematics and Taxonomy

¹ Sutherland, WJ *et al.* 2006. The identification of 100 ecological questions of high policy relevance in the UK. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 43: 617-627.

The report had specifically identified two issues for BRAG to address: for plant pathogenic fungi, co-ordinate bar-coding effort across the UK; explore the options for commissioning the production of new and updated identification guides for the UK fauna and flora. A sub-group will hold a workshop to develop advice for the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee (UKSC). Such advice will clarify where the report recommendations are beyond BRAG remit.

Effective Research Sub-group

The sub-group had highlighted that there remain some significant gaps in knowledge and agreed to draft a paper for the June 2009 meeting.

The Welsh Environment Hub

The Welsh Environment Hub is intended to have a similar function to ERFF (Environment Research Funders' Forum) and SNIFFER (Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research). WEH services include a database of environmental research, a website (www.werh.org), newsletter, and themed reviews and reports.

Updates

EPBRS activity (including consideration of IPBES) and JNCC Research Agenda were discussed briefly.

BRAG membership: BBSRC representative will be invited to join.

BiodivERsA: The outcome of the call under the EU's Sixth Framework Programme is that €15M will fund 11 projects; the UK is a partner in 10 of the 11 projects, with French and German funding going into some of UK partnerships (see <http://www.eurobiodiversa.org/>).

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