

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

GECC Sub-Committee Minutes

23 August 2006

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**GECC SUB-COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY ISSUES
MINUTES: 23 AUGUST 2006**

Attendees:

Pamela Kempton, NERC
Mary Gibby, RBGE
Marcus Yeo, JNCC
Richard Berridge, Defra
Andy Stott, Defra
Chris Lyall, NHM
Richard Ferris, JNCC (Secretariat)
Elizabeth Moore, JNCC (Secretariat)
Miles Parker, Defra (Chair)
Madeleine Garlick, Defra
Karen Dickinson, Defra
Eimear Nic Lughadha, RBGK
Ian Bainbridge, SE
Vicky Jackson, BBSRC
Gary Grubb, ESRC
Eric Blencowe, Defra
Andrea Leedale, Defra

Guests:

Dave Raffaelli, University of York
Alison Holt, University of York

Agenda Item 1: Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received from Glenys Parry (Defra), Paul Leonard (Defra) and Nick Dulvy (CEFAS), Dilys Roe (DfID), Shaun Earl (FCO) and Geoff Boxshall (Royal Society).

Agenda Item 2: Work programme (GECC GBSC (06)07)

Following discussion of the work programme at the GBSC meeting in May, the group considered Terms of Reference (ToR) 4 to 8. ToR 4 which focuses on national capacity, was emphasised as being of key importance to the main GECC. The overlap between GBSC and Environment Research Funders Forum (ERFF) was discussed, and it was felt that there is not a huge overlap at the moment. ERFF are developing a research database compiling information on environmental research undertaken in 2004. It was suggested that a representative from ERFF be invited to attend a future GBSC meeting.

ACTION 2/1: Secretariat to invite a representative from ERFF to a future GBSC meeting.

The group also considered overlaps with ERA-Nets. There are a number of potentially relevant ERA-Nets and it was considered useful to have a list of all the web links with lead contacts.

ACTION 2/2: Secretariat to draw up list of relevant ERA-Nets with lead contacts. **GBSC Members** to consider this list with a view to making suggestions for other ERA-Net representatives attending future GBSC meetings.

Under ToR 6, the group agreed that it would not be suitable to produce a glossy report as had been proposed previously. Reference was made to the GBSC's annual report to the main GECC which summarises the work of the Sub-Committee and provides an opportunity to find out about the work of the other Sub-Committees. The Secretariat is currently preparing the GBSC annual report and will circulate a draft to the GBSC, asking for members' responses by mid-September. In future all GBSC documents should have a footnote link to the GBSC website.

ACTION 2/3: Secretariat to circulate draft GECC report and **GBSC Members** to provide comments by 15 September.

The sufficiency of the national capacity and leadership were discussed. It was felt that there was limited national capacity and lack of clarity in policy ownership to deal with biodiversity research issues in the Crown Dependencies (CD) and Overseas Territories (OT).

ACTION 2/4: Defra (EB), JNCC, SE, FCO and DfID to discuss national capacity and policy ownership issues around biodiversity research within the CD and OTs. This should address who is leading on OT issues, and what the required actions are.

Issues concerning the population of databases and mobilisation of taxonomic data were discussed. The concern related primarily to a funding gap between database generation and population. Much capacity exists in terms of skill sets, but there are limited financial resources and much of the funding comes from outside the UK.

ACTION 2/5: RBG Kew, RBG Edinburgh and NHM to discuss issue of funding for digitising and mobilising taxonomic data. Paper to be prepared for next GBSC meeting and all GBSC members to consider implications of these gaps for their organisations.

A further gap in national capacity was identified within the field of mycology. There is limited capacity in the UK and the possibility of a generational loss across the board. It was noted that BBSRC will not support national collections but can take applications for responsive mode funding (via the Plants & Microbial Sciences Committee and possibly the Genes and Developmental Biology Committee).

ACTION 2/6: RBG Edinburgh and RBG Kew to prepare a paper on the gap in national capacity within the field of mycology, highlighting the issues for the GBSC, for consideration at a future GBSC meeting.

The logistics and practicalities of a combined BRAG/GBSC discussion on some of these issues should be explored.

ACTION 2/7: Secretariat to consider organising a one off GBSC/BRAG meeting to discuss a number of issues of common interest.

ACTION 2/8: Defra (MG), SE and Secretariat to discuss common themes between the Sutherland et al. paper¹, the DIVERSITAS science plan, BRAG research priorities and GBSC research priorities (i.e. how many of these can be applied at a global scale), and provide an update for the GBSC meeting in February 2007.

Agenda Item 3: Aims and work of DIVERSITAS

Dave Raffaelli gave a brief overview of the DIVERSITAS science programme (see copy of overheads for full presentation). DIVERSITAS is one of four programmes within the Earth Science Partnership:

- International Programme of Biodiversity Science (DIVERSITAS)
- International Human Dimensions Programme
- World Climate Research Programme
- International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme

The DIVERSITAS programme comprises three core science projects: BioSUSTAINABILITY, BioDISCOVERY, and EcoSERVICES; which address a number of cross-cutting themes. A fourth, BioGENESIS, has been established to address evolutionary systematics and ensure that overlooked taxonomic groups are “picked up” (i.e. support for work on the Barcode of Life).

DIVERSITAS exists to set a broad science agenda, running workshops and conferences, bringing people together across a wide scientific community. For example, he suggested that DIVERSITAS could provide the institutional linkages for taking forward the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA).

The bioSUSTAINABILITY international project office is based at York University and is funded by NERC. One of the issues that bioSUSTAINABILITY is concerned with is how to improve science communication to policymakers.

How is DIVERSITAS special

DIVERSITAS is unique because it is an international body with a global scope, operates in an interdisciplinary manner, has a strategy that has been developed from the bottom up and has close links with a number of processes such as the MA, the CBD and IMOSEB.

¹ *The identification of 100 ecological questions of high policy relevance in the UK*, W.J. Sutherland et al, August 2006 <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1365-2664.2006.01188.x>

DIVERSITAS' relationships are captured through joint ventures and meetings, rather than on paper or via formal hierarchies. The DIVERSITAS priorities are identified in the science plan which is approved by the sponsors.

Examples of activities DIVERSITAS is involved in

GEOSS – through the BioDISCOVERY project, DIVERSITAS has been asked to devise a science programme in support of GEOSS.

IMoSEB – DIVERSITAS promoted this initiative, and is involved with the development group.

How can GBSC interact with DIVERSITAS?

The Committee agreed that it would be useful to take a close look at the DIVERSITAS Science Plan, to identify any knowledge gaps that might be addressed through actions undertaken by GBSC members (see Action Point 2/8, above). GBSC may be in position to enable the DIVERSITAS Science Plan, e.g. through promotion of science within the UK. Consideration needs to be given to how well DIVERSITAS fits to GBSC's Terms of Reference.

The sub-Committee acknowledged the very impressive range of issues being addressed by DIVERSITAS, and it was recognised that there is a lot of overlap with GBSC objectives. The extent to which the DIVERSITAS Science Plan has been tested for policy relevance was queried. Dave Raffaelli suggested that the establishment of an Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity could be seen as an endorsement of the Science Plan.

Agenda Item 4: Follow up to the MA workshop

GBSC members were asked to provide information on how they were engaging with the recommendations from the workshop. All members provided examples of work being undertaken either in response to, or with relevance to the recommendations.

ACTION 4/1: ALL GBSC Members to submit details of MA-related activities to the Secretariat, for collation into a single document, which will be added to the GECC website by November 2006.

Agenda Item 5: IMoSEB

Andy Stott gave a presentation on the consultation process towards an International Mechanism on Biodiversity Science². Reference was also made to the Biodiversity Communication from the EU³.

² IMoSEB: <http://www.imoseb.net/>

³ **HALTING THE LOSS OF BIODIVERSITY BY 2010 — AND BEYOND Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being**
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/current_biodiversity_policy/biodiversity_comm_2006/index_en.htm

There are many different visions of what the IMoSEB might do, reflecting the different individuals on the Executive Committee. It is also unclear how it would link to the CBD and SBSTTA and who would pay for it. The need for an IMoSEB assumes that the CBD is failing in some way. GBSC questioned whether this is true and, if so, how, why, and what can be done?

Concern was expressed that IMoSEB could end up doing the same work as SBSTTA, challenging the remit of SBSTTA. Discussion sought to establish whether GBSC members had been approached over the IMoSEB consultation, how many were sending individual responses, and the benefit of a combined UK response. GBSC also considered what the UK would wish an international mechanism to look like.

GBSC members expressed support in principle for the proposal in the EC Biodiversity Communication to improve the provision of scientific advice on biodiversity issues to the Commission, but noted some concern about the specific mechanism suggested in the Annex to the Communication.

ACTION 5/1: GBSC Members to inform Defra (MG) if their organisation is going to respond to the IMoSEB consultation, how they had been made aware of consultations and any other views on initial questions, by 11 September.

Agenda Item 6: Minutes of the last meeting (GECC GBSC M(06)03)

The minutes were taken as a true and accurate record of the last meeting.

Agenda Item 7: Actions and matters arising

The Secretariat provided an update on the outstanding actions.

Action 2/1 concerning the Conventions paper will be carried forward and reported on at the November meeting (Defra, GP).

ACTION 7/1: GP to coordinate working group considering how to proceed with the Conventions paper. Working group to include MY, AS and IB and to report back to the November GBSC meeting with one worked up example of the recommended approach.

In response to Action 3/1 a paper on invasive alien species was circulated (GECC GBSC (06) 12). Discussion of the findings of this paper will be added to the agenda of the November meeting since it will be important to get a response from DfID and FCO.

In response to Action 6/1 feedback from the ecosystem services research group meeting held in June will be provided at the November meeting by either DfID or NERC.

ACTION 7/2: DfID or NERC to provide an update at November GBSC meeting on their ecosystem services research meeting of 27/06.

Action 6/2 on the Stern Review will be reported on at the November meeting since this is only just materialising (Defra, MP).

ACTION 7/3: MP to provide a report on the Stern Review at the November GBSC meeting.

Action 7/1 on ranking the research priorities for ocean acidification is lacking a policy lead. Andrea Leedale, Defra agreed to follow this up and the Secretariat will liaise on progress to date and provide support in the process.

ACTION 7/4: Defra (AL) to provide an update at the November GBSC meeting on progress with ranking the research priorities for ocean acidification.

In response to Action 8/2, the main findings from Defra's Sustainable Consumption and Production research will be posted on the website imminently. When released they will be available from:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/business/scp/projects.htm>

Agenda Item 8: GBIF

Madeleine Garlick provided a brief update on developments at the last two GBIF governing boards. The April 2006 meeting focused on realigning the strategic plan, which made it more consistent with Defra's biodiversity targets and achievements. Furthermore, Defra has let a contract to UNEP-WCMC to identify mechanisms for aligning GBIF's work with the CBD global indicators.

The June meeting focused on finance with the aim of agreeing the financial annexes of the MoU. Agreement was reached on how much GBIF should grow over the next few years.

Defra is now looking at the UK's future participation in GBIF and reviewing the revised work programme to assess whether it meets Defra's needs.

Agenda Item 9: BRAG report

Richard Ferris provided a brief update on the UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group. BRAG focuses at the national level and the Secretariat for the group is the same as for the GBSC. There should probably be closer links between this group and the GBSC and there has been the suggestion of a possible back-to-back future meeting where the groups look at common issues (see Action 2/7 above).

BRAG is currently undergoing a review and the response so far has been for its role to be clarified since it is not a funding body but it seeks to influence existing funding. It was also noted that it should work more closely with other bodies such as UK PopNet.

Currently the ToR are being redrafted for consideration by the UK BAP Standing Committee to consider in October. Additionally, the priorities from all the research strategies that BRAG has produced across a number of themes

are being pulled together for a report of the group's activities 2003-2006 which will be made widely available.

Agenda Item 10: Update and review of emerging scientific questions concerning global biodiversity

It was agreed that this standing agenda item be considered in future meetings alongside other work programme issues.

Agenda Item 11: Diary / meeting dates

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 2 November at Defra in London. The Secretariat will establish a suitable date for the subsequent meeting to be held in February 2007 at the JNCC in Peterborough.

Agenda Item 12: AOB

RBG Kew noted that they have signed a MoU with the CBD and they will be hosting a meeting to discuss requests for capacity building by CBD partners in early September.