

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Annual Report

**Report of the Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)
to the Annual Meeting of the UK Global Environmental Change
Committee (UK GECC)**

2004 - 2005

For other documents from
Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)
Visit: <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-4628>



**11th Meeting of the Global Environmental Change Committee
12th October, 2005
14:00 to 17:00**

**Location: Room 8a/b, Ashdown House,
123 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6DE**

Global Biodiversity Sub Committee – Chairman's Report

Remit of the GBSC

The remit of the GBSC is to inform UK science strategy relating to global biodiversity and sustainable use. The focus of the sub-committee is on the science underlying the key global issues. The focus of discussions held on agenda items are on the implications for research strategy and views of members are sought on all substantive items.

Meetings and attendance

The Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee have met four times to date, one meeting being held in November last year and three meetings held this year (15th Feb, 24th June, 23rd Aug). The August meeting was held at UNEP-WCMC and involved external presentations from Defra, and DFID / UNEP-WCMC. A further special meeting is scheduled before the end of this year (17th Nov) in cooperation with the Royal Society to evaluate the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and discuss its key messages, knowledge gaps and policy implications (see paragraph below). Meetings have been well attended and as membership has become more settled, discussions have become more fruitful. A DFID representative has however been missed at the GBSC meeting, but we hope we are close to resolving this issue.

GBSC Programme of Work

The long-term objectives of the GBSC are to increase our awareness of relevant International conventions and scientific programmes, find out what is being done in order to deliver or feed into them and identify significant gaps in our involvement. The GBSC Programme of Work is therefore informed by the schedule of meetings and reporting commitments under international conventions.

International Conventions

Five specific global biodiversity-related Conventions exist (the CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar and the WHC), and there are a number of other conventions which relate to biodiversity. There is also another tier of international agreements and initiatives (such as the MA, GBIF and GISP) to engage, in order to achieve our biodiversity goals. Sustainable Development is at the heart of all of the Conventions' work, which will encourage involvement with institutions such as the WTO and WHO. A 'work-in-progress' paper has been produced and has been on the Agenda for all four of the GBSC meetings. The paper examines:

- overview of convention commitments
- responsibility for UK delivery
- agency actions
- gap analysis

Members of the GBSC have been asked to populate the paper with information on science programmes already occurring in their organisation, relating to the convention / initiative, and where they consider the science and research gaps to be.

The paper is continually being revised and up-dated. The intention of the paper is that it can be accessed for information regarding the conventions / initiatives, and for institutions to be aware of others' work - identifying overlaps and specifically gaps. The paper is shortly to be put onto the GECC website and will be periodically up-dated.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) was introduced to the GBSC during the February meeting (with a presentation by Neville Ash (UNEP-WCMC)). GBSC members were given an overview of the processes used in producing the report and a synthesis of the main findings, with particular relevance to biodiversity.

It was noted that whilst the MA does not aim to set a research agenda, it does make explicit references to gaps and shortages of information which could help to inform the research community. The GBSC decided to take forward the topic of gaps in science and research needs.

A paper was produced in collaboration with Neville Ash, which pulled out science /research gaps from the MA. This was discussed at a subsequent GBSC meeting, where a working-group was established to take forward the research gap analysis.

As knowledge gaps were being identified, it was considered that we must also identify a process for addressing them. It was unanimously agreed that it is crucial for this task to be carried out in a fully integrated manner. The concept of a workshop to discuss the emerging biodiversity research needs following the MA, involving a relatively small gathering of key people, was proposed at the June meeting. The concept of the workshop has been evolving since then and is currently scheduled take place on the 17th November. Discussions will be based around the application of the MA, with the aim to provide a framework and formulate a UK position for a possible future European event, possibly under the auspices of the EPBRS.

Ecosystem services and links to biodiversity

Tying in to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, two presentations were given at the August meeting on Ecosystem Services and links to biodiversity. Sarah Love (Defra) gave a presentation on the Defra Review of Ecosystem Services and Neville Ash (UNEP-WCMC) gave a presentation on the on-going DFID funded project on Biodiversity-Ecosystem Services linkages. There was a substantive discussion after these presentations.

Summary of identified themes for further research:

- How to perform social vs. economic valuation of ecosystem services (using a broader range of case studies);
- an improved understanding of ecosystem health & thresholds of change (cause-effect models);
- the need to ensure the appropriate distribution of the costs and benefits of ecosystem services (who supplies, who benefits? all scales);
- how to undertake global-scale valuation of ecosystem services (this is perceived to be easier currently for marine ecosystems);
- developing a common understanding (definitions, standard conceptual models);
- raising awareness.

The following Items have been introduced to the sub-committee to ensure members are aware of them and to allow the sub-committee the opportunity to engage, where appropriate:

BiodivERsA

A presentation on BiodivERsA was made by Richard Ferris (Defra/JNCC) and Pamela Kempton (NERC), the two UK partners in this ERA-Net project during the GBSC meeting held in June.

The EC are funding a number of European Research Area Networks (ERA-Nets) to identify and promote common approaches between research programme management within Members States. One of these, BiodivERsA, is concerned with biodiversity, and will develop opportunities for collaboration among key national agencies which fund biodiversity research. BiodivERsA will inventory existing regional, national and international programmes, exchange best practices, and commission coordinated research in support of European efforts to conserve biodiversity, and ensure sustainable exploitation of biological resources. Defra and NERC represent the UK.

It was acknowledged that the most relevant components of the BiodivERsA workplan to the work of GBSC, are WP2 (*Identification of best practices and barriers to implementation*) and WP4 (*Information gathering and linkage of ERA-Net members' programmes with developing countries*).

QUEST

Kirsty Adam (NERC) outlined NERC's commitment to the QUEST Programme during the August meeting. This is a 6-year programme, with an investment of £21M. NERC is looking for a step-change improvement in our ability to monitor global environmental change in support of policy, and hope that the benefits can be maximised through appropriate synergy and targeted, interdisciplinary research.

Sarah Cornell (QUEST-University of Bristol) then presented an introduction to the QUEST Programme. For full details see <http://quest.bris.ac.uk>

Points from the following discussion:

It was noted that QUEST are not setting out to do new work but are concerned with consolidating existing scientific information into a central location where a variety of users can access information.

- GBSC asked QUEST to consider functional diversity – what is important and how it is impacted by global change
- A workshop is being developed in relation to biodiversity. QUEST will keep GBSC informed of progress.

Future discussion items

- Climate Change and biodiversity (guest speaker Martin Parry, February 2006 meeting)
- Ocean biodiversity