

Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC)

Meeting papers

GECC Sub-Committee on Global Biodiversity Issues: Minutes

2 November 2006

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**GECC SUB-COMMITTEE ON GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY ISSUES
MINUTES: 2 NOVEMBER 2006**

Attendees:

Glenys Parry, Defra
Andy Stott, Defra
Amanda Reid, BBSRC
Vicky Jackson, BBSRC
Ian Bainbridge, SE
Marcus Yeo, JNCC
Mary Gibby, RBGE
Emiear Nic Lughadha, RBGK
Chris Lyal, NHM
Andrea Leedale, Defra
Shaun Earl, FCO
Nick Dulvy, CEFAS
Richard Ferris, JNCC (Secretariat)
Elizabeth Moore, JNCC (Secretariat)
Miles Parker, Defra (Chair)
Dilys Roe, DfID
Madeleine Garlick, Defra
Sarah Nelson, Defra
Sarah Moon, Defra
Rachel Garthwaite, Royal Society
Pamela Kempton, NERC
Gary Grubb, ESRC

Guests:

Jacques Weber, Institute Français de la Biodiversité
Coenraad Krijger, Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

Agenda Item 1: Introductions and Apologies

Apologies were received from Eric Blencowe (Defra) and Richard Berridge (Defra).

Agenda Item 2: BiodivERsA

Coenraad Krijger presented the EC-funded project, BiodivERsA which started in May 2005 and runs until April 2009. There are 19 partners in the European Research Area Network (ERA-Net), from 14 countries, including Defra and NERC. The achievements to date have been setting up a web-based database of funded programmes and identifying best practice in biodiversity research. Proposals for a common call will be discussed in January with all the partners. The intention is for the common call to be published with the procedure for applying and specific priorities and criteria laid out. Applications for funding will be short-listed by a committee made up of the organisations participating in the co-funding. They will then be peer-reviewed before a final decision is taken.

Coenraad said that they are trying to find common ground for the priorities from all the partners but this is challenging since there is a diversity of partners with different backgrounds and objectives.

The point was made from the group that for developing countries, knowledge transfer needs to be accompanied by capacity building and that there could also be competing needs for limited resources. Jacques confirmed that this will be discussed at the BiodivERsA meeting in January and some organisations have competence in this area. There will be an electronic conference sponsored by the BiodivERsA project and the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy looking at developing countries (see attached document for more information).

Clarity was sought on how BiodivERsA addresses global and European biodiversity issues. Coenraad explained that some subjects are common to all areas and there is nothing to prevent BiodivERsA considering global issues. However there may be some constraints from partners who have reserved funding for national priorities.

The group asked about the status of Euronet plus in the context of the EU's 7th Framework Programme (FP7). Coenraad said that the funding is being mainstreamed within the thematic programmes and priorities and there is a need to encourage coordination within the funders and managers and report to the EC on proposals. Andy Stott noted that the UK approach to biodiversity is to get it integrated into as many other programmes and areas as possible, assuming it can be clearly tracked once the programme gets adopted. Miles Parker noted that the benefit of ERAnets was the ability for national funders to plan their programmes in function of those in other countries and to level their funding against that of other members of the networks. Clarity was sought on whether this opportunity would continue in FP7. The group agreed that it would be useful to consider FP7 in more detail at a future GBSC meeting, and that formal input from the EC on how biodiversity fits within the framework would be helpful.

ACTION 2/1: Defra (MP) and Defra (AS) to discuss a proposal and timing for inviting a representative from the EC (possibly Martin Sharman) to give a presentation to the GBSC on FP7.

The Chair thanked the guests for the presentation and discussion and noted that it would be helpful to keep informed of what is happening with BiodivERsA through the national contacts, (Pamela Kempton and Andy Stott) who are also GBSC members. He noted that the action is for all members to think about how this plays into our national priorities. Andy Stott noted that as a practical issue GBSC members could consider how to find UK funding contributions. Jacques Weber estimated that the joint call is currently about €10m, so it is likely to be a major call which will be published next year, for funding in 2008.

Agenda Item 3: Work programme (GECC GBSC (06) 07)

The Chair suggested that since there were a number of follow-up actions under this item the group would not be looking at other areas of the work programme at this time. However, national capacity (which relates to terms of reference 4) will need to be a substantial agenda item for the next GBSC meeting.

Follow up actions from August GBSC meeting relating to work programme

Action 2/4 called for a working group to discuss national capacity and policy ownership issues around biodiversity research within the Overseas Territories and

Crown Dependencies. Eric Blencowe was not able to attend the meeting, and the item would therefore be carried forward.

ACTION 3/1: Defra (EB), JNCC, SE, FCO and DfID to discuss national capacity and policy ownership issues around biodiversity research within the OTs and CDs. This should address who is leading on OT issues and what the required actions are.

Marcus Yeo reported on a recent conference organised by the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum in Jersey at which almost all the territories were represented. The discussion at the conference was very useful and will be used as a springboard for future debate.

Action 2/5 called for a working group to prepare a paper on the national capacity issues of funding for digitising and mobilising taxonomic data. RBG Kew and NHM apologised for not having the paper ready for the meeting. This will be carried forward to the next GBSC meeting.

ACTION 3/2: RBG Kew, Edinburgh and NHM to prepare paper on national capacity issues of funding for digitising and mobilising taxonomic data.

The Chair asked how this links to the work of GBIF which sets standards in the way data are collected and delivered. Chris Lyal noted that the funding for GBIF is likely to continue for the next 2 years. The new Work Programme has taken into account the needs of the users of GBIF-mediated data to a greater extent than previously, and this will have implications for prioritisation of data collected with GBIF support and made available through GBIF. The UNEP-WCMC bar-coding initiative also links to this. The Chair observed that GBSC is considering this issue from a global perspective, however these issues also impact on national capacity which would be considered by the UK BRAG.

Action 2/6 called for RBG Kew and Edinburgh to prepare a paper on the gap in the national capacity within the field of mycology. Mary Gibby reported that the paper has been initiated, but that CABI's involvement was required. It was noted that this is also a joint issue for GBSC and BRAG, and that this action should be carried forward to the next GBSC meeting.

ACTION 3/3: RBG Kew and Edinburgh to prepare paper on the gap in the national capacity within the field of mycology. Paper should also consider the balance of collections in relation to national and international biodiversity activity.

Agenda item 4: Minutes of the last meeting (GECC GBSC M(06)13)

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

Agenda item 5: Actions and matters arising (GECC GBSC MA(06)14)

The Secretariat noted progress against the actions from the last meeting.

Action 2/1 called for a representative from ERFF to attend a GBSC meeting. The Secretariat will extend an invitation to Mary Barkham to attend the meeting in February.

Under Action 2/3 Miles Parker noted the comments from the main GECC meeting in October, which expressed endorsement of the work programme and approval of the GBSC's endeavours.

Action 2/8 called for a working group to discuss the common themes between the Sutherland et. al. paper, the DIVERSITAS science plan, BRAG and GBSC research priorities and provide an update for the February GBSC meeting.

ACTION 5/1: Defra (MG), SE and Secretariat to discuss the common themes between the Sutherland et. al. paper, the DIVERSITAS science plan, BRAG and GBSC research priorities (i.e. how many of these can be applied at a global scale) and provide an update for the February GBSC meeting.

Action 4/1 called for all members to submit details of their work in relation to the recommendations from the MA workshop held in February. It was noted that only a few responses had been received by the Secretariat. Furthermore, Glenys Parry commented that there is an assessment of the MA being undertaken by a sub-committee of the EAC and it would be extremely helpful for Defra to have responses within the next fortnight. As a follow up action, it would also be useful to discuss this paper at the February GBSC meeting.

ACTION 5/2: ALL GBSC MEMBERS to submit details of MA-related activities in relation to the recommendations from the MA workshop, to the Secretariat by 15 November. Secretariat to collate responses and forward to Defra, and to add discussion to agenda for February GBSC meeting.

There was some discussion about action 5/1 which related to the consultation on IMoSEB. Madeleine Garlick noted that few responses had been received from GBSC members but that it would be useful to have a running dialogue on member's involvement with IMoSEB. The group observed that the questionnaire on the website (www.imoseb.net) was hard to find, unclear in what it was trying to achieve, and had no explicit deadline. Jacques Weber (representing the IMoSEB Secretariat) noted that the objectives of the consultation were very broad, essentially collecting opinions from around the world on what a scientific mechanism on biodiversity expertise should be. He added that it is important to look at existing mechanisms and good practice and gave the example of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), which is considered a good model.

Andy Stott referred to a conference in Leipzig in October which provided recommendations for a knowledge-policy interface for biodiversity governance (see note circulated with draft minutes for full details).

Pamela Kempton provided a brief presentation by way of an update for action 7/2, which called for information on the DfID and NERC ecosystem services research meeting of June. The group, which also includes Defra and ESRC, have agreed a programme name, which is Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA) and a set of goals. They looked at the drivers and tried to map the science issues and the development goals. Four regions were defined with specific research priorities to focus on:

- China – delivering ecosystem goods and services

- South Asia – adaptation to monsoon variability
- Sub-Saharan Africa – resource trade-offs to reduce vulnerability
- Amazon and Andes – biostability across these areas

It was noted that there should be a balance between the funding being attributed to developing countries and the UK. Furthermore, this programme may have a relationship with the proposals for a common call in BiodivERsA. Pamela confirmed that the programme would be in the order of £4m p.a. and it would run for 5 years, but that this figure could be increased if other partners were involved. They hope to talk with representatives of the Darwin Initiative to look for synergies between the programmes and would like to involve FCO in the programme and bring in European colleagues, for example BiodivERsA.

In response to action 7/2 Miles Parker noted that the Stern Review had just been published and the web-link will be circulated to members with the draft minutes. The group agreed that it would be useful to have a brief presentation on this at the February meeting.

Agenda item 6: Invasive Alien Species (GECC GBSC (06)12)

Marcus Yeo gave a brief introduction to the paper which was drawn up following the presentation by CABI to the GBSC in May. He noted that at the core there were 6 priority areas identified for research, and he welcomed comments from members on these.

The group agreed that whilst climate change was specifically mentioned in the fourth priority it would affect and underpin a lot of the other priorities as well. Furthermore, the priorities are multidisciplinary and it would be useful to identify what other countries are doing in this area. It was observed that other communities are involved, for example phytosanitary controls and the World Health Organisation, since the preventative side is important in this issue.

ACTION 6/1: JNCC and **SE** to collect comments from GBSC members and ascertain whether amendments to the paper are required. Also, to discuss process for mapping activities of other countries, to identify lead agencies and gaps, and to subsequently review how we are taking these priorities forward.

Agenda item 7: Ocean Acidification research priorities (GECC GBSC (06)16)

Andrea Leedale gave an introduction to the draft paper prepared by the working group. The group had found it difficult to rank the research priorities since understanding of ocean acidification is poorly developed. There was significant overlap with some of the research priorities, so removing the duplications would help to refine the list. The group had tried to make explicit links to the Royal Society report on ocean acidification. The emphasis on calcifiers was still necessary due to the lack of observational monitoring data. Measures of pH alone are not accurate enough to show what is happening to species. There also needs to be a greater understanding of the combined effects of increased temperatures and pH levels.

It was suggested that the working group use the same format as had been used by the invasive species working group to identify the principles and key priorities. This would help take the research priorities forward.

ACTION 7/1: Defra (AL) to do a further edit on the paper, using the same format as the invasive species paper, taking into account other work being undertaken in this area. Revised paper to be circulated in advance of February GBSC meeting.

The group noted that there were some issues such as carbon capture and storage that were not within the GBSC's remit for consideration, but that we need to understand more about the issues, effects and tipping points to identify the priorities for global biodiversity.

Agenda item 8: Climate change event

Rachel Garthwaite gave an update on the joint Royal Society, Defra, DfID and NERC workshop being hosted by the Royal Society in June 2007, working title *Biodiversity – climate interactions: adaptation, mitigation and human livelihoods*. The Royal Society Council approved the proposal in October and offered to provide the rooms and refreshments for the high profile two-day event. The Council were very keen on the proposal and suggested putting a further proposal in for a subsequent discussion meeting to be held in 2008.

Defra, NERC and DfID had committed to provide co-funding to cover the costs of the speakers. The working group were seeking additional sponsorship to cover the evening meal and after-dinner speakers. JNCC and Kew offered to contribute funds to support the event.

The working group were currently drawing up the programme and list of speakers and would publicise this more broadly in the New Year.

Agenda item 9: Conventions paper (GECC GBSC (05)10)

The working group were due to meet later today and would be able to provide a report back to the February GBSC meeting.

Agenda item 10: BRAG report

Richard Ferris provided an update on BRAG. He noted that the group was reviewed earlier this year and a revised terms of reference (ToR) had now been endorsed by the UK Biodiversity Partnership Standing Committee. The main change to the ToR was an increased emphasis on communicating the outcomes from the working groups, greater clarity on the scope and strategic role which was focused on cross-cutting research issues. The BRAG Secretariat is preparing an end of term report summarising the research recommendations from the BRAG sub-groups. The next BRAG meeting will be 5 December and it is likely that the membership will be reviewed and will include a smaller business co-ordination group to manage the relationships with the country groups and the GBSC.

GBSC recognised that there were several joint issues to be considered with BRAG, including national capacity issues relating to taxonomy and mycology. It was suggested that where appropriate, joint sub-groups should be established with members from BRAG and GBSC on national/international issues.

ACTION 10/1: RF to report the GBSC discussion to the next BRAG meeting.

Agenda item 11: Diary/meeting dates

Next meeting would be held at JNCC, Peterborough on 6 February 2007. The Secretariat will liaise with RBG Kew to establish a convenient date for the May meeting and then circulate it to the GBSC.

Agenda item 12: AOB

Introductory paper on GEOSS (GECC GBSC (06)15)

Miles Parker introduced the paper on GEOSS which presented background information and asked whether the group would like to consider the issue in more detail at a future GBSC meeting and whether there was support for the WCMC workshop which seeks to identify what UK activities should be initiated in response to GEOSS, GMES and INSPIRE.

The group agreed that in general it would be useful to consider these initiatives at a future meeting and it was suggested that an invitation be extended to a representative from NERC who was involved in the Countryside Survey to attend the May GBSC meeting. Furthermore, support was given to the proposal of the WCMC workshop and the group would be keen to ensure it was represented at the workshop.

Miles Parker suggested that at the May GBSC meeting the group should look to produce a synthesis of all the work it has undertaken and rank the priorities of the different work areas. This could be fed into the annual GECC meeting which is normally held in October, along with the standard report from the group.