



**10th Meeting of
The UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group
Tuesday 4th December 2007
Defra, Ergon House, London**

Present: Peter Costigan (Chair), Richard Ferris (UK BRAG Secretariat), Chris Baker (NERC), Greg Mudge (SNH), Andy Stott (Defra), Tim Blackstock (Countryside Council for Wales), Kevin Charman (Natural England), Mike Fay (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew), Havard Prosser (National Assembly for Wales), Richard Brand-Hardy (Defra), Kevin Watts (Forest Research), Mark Spencer (Natural History Museum), Andrew Pullin (University of Bangor, representing BES), Ceri Margerison (BES, Guest), Lloyd Peck (BAS, representing NERC), Jo Myers (Defra), Mark Stevenson (Defra)

Apologies: Paul Rose (JNCC), Michel Kaiser (University of Bangor), Mark Wright (EHS), Ian Bainbridge (Scottish Executive), Sallie Bailey (Forestry Commission), Mary Gibby (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh), Allan Watt (CEH), Sarah Webster (Defra), David Macdonald (WildCRU, University of Oxford), Scot Mathieson (SEPA), Davy McCracken (SAC)

1. Welcome

Peter Costigan welcomed members to Ergon House, for the 10th Meeting of UK BRAG, and welcomed two guests – Lloyd Peck (NERC) and Ceri Margerison (BES).

2. Minutes of the last meeting

With a few minor amendments, these were approved as a true record of the 9th UK BRAG meeting, 07 June 2007.

3. Matters arising

The majority of matters arising had been dealt with, with the following still to be addressed in full:

ACTION 3.1 (previous ACTION 3.1, carried forward): systematics research and mycology research - UK BRAG agreed to keep this action live, maintaining close contact with the GECC Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC). A paper entitled "Mycology in the UK – the taxonomic impediment" was prepared by the Natural History Museum, the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, and presented to GBSC in February 2007.

It was noted that RBGE and RBG Kew are discussing the future of mycology within the two institutes. RBG Kew and CABI are currently reorganising mycological research and collections, with implications for UK capacity. Until the exercise is completed, it is difficult to agree on next steps. It is proposed that UK BRAG defers action on this issue, and awaits further guidance.

The Secretariat will circulate the GBSC paper to all UK BRAG members, to raise awareness of the issues. Deadline: 20 December 2007.

The House of Lords is considering a follow-up review of taxonomy and systematics in the UK. Assuming this takes place, it will be in the first part of next year (January-February). This may require a review of the various documents which we have been developed over the past couple of years. This presents a valuable opportunity to report progress and gaps. Therefore, the need to establish a sub-group to address taxonomic needs assessment and capacity across the UK is strengthened.

A sub-group to address taxonomic needs assessment and capacity across the UK will be convened, with the aim to produce a paper for UK BRAG and, if necessary, submit comments to the House of Lords review. The Secretariat will ask for volunteers from both UK BRAG and GBSC to serve on this sub-group. Deadline: 11 January 2008.

ACTION 3.2 (previous ACTION 3.2): UK BRAG members to provide the secretariat with a list of key contacts within their organisations, to form the basis of a circulation list, by 11 January 2008.

ACTION 3.3 (previous ACTION 3.3): Peter Costigan to contact Wildlife and Countryside Link, to invite them to continue as members of UK BRAG. Deadline: 11 January 2008.

ACTION 3.4 (previous ACTION 3.5): UK BRAG members to provide the secretariat with a list of key contacts within their communities (as opposed to their own organisations), to form the basis of a circulation list, by 11 January 2008.

ACTION 3.5 (previous ACTION 3.6): summary paper in Journal of Applied Ecology – the Secretariat and Davy McCracken to discuss next steps, and agree a timetable for action. Deadline: 18 January 2008.

ACTION 3.6 (previous ACTION 4.8): the Secretariat is asked to draft 3-4 paragraphs on the scope of the proposed paper, and discuss this with Davy McCracken, by 11 January 2008.

ACTION 3.7 (previous ACTION 4.2): Members are requested to notify the Secretariat of times/dates for key decisions in developing strategies of their organisations and, where possible, big, cross-organisational initiatives (i.e. thinking beyond their own organisations). Recognising that “moving targets” (i.e. rolling programmes, without fixed dates) make this a difficult action, the focus will be for major initiatives, only. Deadline: 11 January 2008.

ACTION 3.8 (previous ACTION 4.3): the Secretariat is asked to produce a paper outlining the opportunities (timelines with key decision points) to inform and influence funders. Deadline: 1 February 2008.

ACTION 3.9 (previous ACTION 4.4): the Secretariat to access both the NERC and BBSRC peer-review college members’ database, and contact those with biodiversity interest. Deadline: 18 January 2008.

ACTION 3.10 (previous ACTION 7.1): Andy Stott to send information on the BiodivERsA research database to the Secretariat, asking members to submit information on the research programmes of their organisations. To date only Defra have submitted any information to the database. Deadline: 1 February 2008.

4. Knowledge Transfer / Influencing Strategy

The Secretariat introduced a short paper, to serve as a first draft.

Andrew Pullin recommended that UK BRAG papers needed to be publishable if the group wished to reach the academic community. For example, review papers in *Journal of Applied Ecology* would achieve a greater impact than simply “publishing” on the UK BRAG website. However, it was acknowledged that timing would be an issue, since it can take up to 12 months from submission to publication.

Havard Prosser considered a workshop approach to be particularly useful in reaching research funders and policymakers. Workshops are best held during the summer, lasting no more than ½ -1 day. An event such as this will hit more targets than a series of bilateral meetings.

Peter Costigan identified the need to stimulate responsive mode applications from the academic community, and this might require a different mechanism such as a BES meeting or session. Andrew Pullin pointed out that the academic community needs to be incentivised, as these are the people best placed to identify knowledge gaps.

Kevin Charman suggested that UK BRAG could use the marine paper (BRAG 10/4) as a test of how to influence the research, funding and policy communities; and questioned the need for a generic strategy paper.

Jo Myers felt that it would be necessary to develop an action plan as part of any generic paper, outlining targets for the forthcoming 12 months. Andrew Pullin asked at what frequency such a paper would need to be updated.

Tim Blackstock suggested that there would be value in UK BRAG commissioning reviews of important issues, although recognised that the group does not have much money for this. In response, Peter Costigan asked whether individual member organisations would be prepared to put in money to support such reviews.

ACTION 4.1: Member organisations to consider whether, in principle, they would be prepared to contribute money in support of commissioned reviews, and notify the Secretariat. Deadline: 1 February 2008.

Andrew Pullin considered that the key issue was how to ensure that any papers had a clear policy focus. Peter Costigan stated that this was one of the main benefits of UK BRAG sub-groups (i.e. their mix of academics and policymakers).

Lloyd Peck asked what membership of UK BRAG offered to academic members. Does membership enhance opportunities to access research funds? Peter Costigan responded that members were part of a valuable forum in which they could articulate ideas, and that there were advantages in this for both the research and policy community. Lloyd Peck suggested that there might be value in an annual meeting of academics and the UK BRAG policy organisations, with a publication as an output. The Secretariat responded that such an idea (i.e. an annual science meeting) has already been raised, and collaboration with the BES was one means of delivering this (see later agenda item).

Peter Costigan asked for volunteers to help draft a paper. In response, Andrew Pullin, Jo Myers, Mike Fay, and Havard Prosser offered to assist the Secretariat in this task.

ACTION 4.2: a Knowledge Transfer paper to be drafted by 29 February 2008 (the Secretariat to draft a framework and ask for contributions and comments, via e-mail consultation), and circulated to the wider UK BRAG for comments. Deadline for comments: 14 March 2008.

5. Presentation on the NERC Strategy

Lloyd Peck, NERC's Biodiversity Theme Leader, gave a short presentation on the development of NERC's new strategy, *Next Generation Science for Planet Earth 2007-2012*. The seven themes were outlined:

- Climate system
- Biodiversity
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Natural hazards
- Environment, pollution and human health
- Earth system science
- Technology

Climate science is the highest priority for NERC, and all seven themes are outside of the "blue skies" science that NERC supports. These science themes are likely to be developed alongside thematic programmes, which will no longer be the only mechanism (the intention is to expand NERC's portfolio of delivery mechanisms, with thematic programmes being just one such mechanism). In addition, the new themes will take some funding from research programmes within NERC institutes. Although investment will be relatively small to begin with, the funding will be ramped up to a maximum around 2014.

Theme Leaders are charged with drawing up Action Plans, in addition to their role as a conduit for information and an interface between NERC and its user community. Each theme has a theme report, outlining the main issues to be addressed. The theme reports can be downloaded from the NERC website. Follow the link to download the biodiversity theme report: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/themes/biodiversity/resources.asp>

Action Plans will go to NERC's Science and Innovation Strategy Board (SISB) on 27 February 2008. SISB will then discuss the Plans with Theme Leaders, after which there will be an opportunity for liaison with the wider community. SISB will make recommendations to NERC Council, and cross-theme ideas are more likely to be supported.

It is possible for UK BRAG to assist Lloyd's work in a couple of ways:

- Formulation of actions within the Action Plan (particularly ideas on new tools and techniques)
- Helping to influence SISB
- Helping to build consortia for research funding

Although no formal mechanism exists for influencing SISB, the membership is "open access", and the most important need is to influence the non-biologists. For details of membership, follow the link: <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/about/work/boards/science/members.asp>

ACTION 5.1: Peter Costigan to write to both SISB and NERC Council, sending copies of the UK BRAG summary report to all members. Deadline: 7 January 2008.

Kevin Charman asked about linkages with other Research Councils. Lloyd Peck responded that Theme Leaders have been asked to consider interactions with other bodies, particularly cross-Research Council links.

6. Collaboration with the British Ecological Society (BES)

The Secretariat introduced a paper (BRAG 10/3), reporting on the joint UK BRAG / BES discussion event at the 2007 Annual Meeting held in Glasgow, and outlining ideas for a Special Session on *Ecosystem Services* at the 2008 Annual Meeting at Imperial College, London.

The success of the 2007 event in raising UK BRAG's profile among the academic community was noted. It also highlighted the need for the group to strengthen links to the UK BAP, i.e. through operational, action-based research (generic, rather than focused on individual HAPs and SAPs) – see later agenda item.

It was felt that UK BRAG needed to synthesise information in more usable formats, and that the BES could assist the group with this (the *Ecological Issues* series was cited as a particularly useful format). It was recognised that UK BRAG is not fast in terms of responsiveness to urgent issues, with policy decisions in relation to set-aside given as an example of an issue that the group should comment upon.

Collaboration with the BES should be extended to include the GBSC, with the three working together closely.

The focus of the Special Session received support from members. Andrew Pullin pointed out that the Centre for Evidence Based Conservation (CEBC) will be taking forward a number of new reviews on ecosystem services. It was agreed that a Steering Committee was needed to develop the programme. This should be made up of UK BRAG members, alongside proposer, Peter Carey (CEH), and Dan Osborn (BES/NERC). The Steering Committee would comprise:

- Peter Carey (CEH)
- Dan Osborn (BES/NERC)
- Richard Ferris (UK BRAG Secretariat)
- Andrew Pullin
- Peter Costigan

ACTION 6.1: The Secretariat to arrange a meeting of the Steering Committee in January/February 2008. Deadline: 20 December 2007.

7. Joint UK BRAG and BRIG Workshop on UK BAP Research

The Secretariat proposed a workshop, involving members from UK BRAG and BRIG, to consider research actions arising out of the *UK BAP Species and Habitat Review*. In August 2008, the new UK List of Priority Species and Habitats was published¹. Currently, groups of species experts are identifying priority actions for each of the 1149 species on the UK BAP list. One of the action categories is *Research*, and BRIG and UK BRAG have been asked by the Standing Committee to make recommendations on how to implement the research actions that will be identified by these experts (paper due on 01/02/08).

A *draft list of priority actions* for these priority species was developed early in 2007 and provides an early view of the type of research actions that can be expected when the data are received by JNCC on 1 February 2008. The “research list” as put forward requires a detailed assessment, to provide greater focus, reduce duplication, and set out some priorities for action. By creating a joint group, meeting in February/March 2008, dialogue

¹ <http://www.ukbap.org.uk/NewPriorityList.aspx>

between UK BRAG and BRIG will be encouraged and a shared approach to research in support of the UK BAP can be developed. This may well have the added benefit of clarifying UK BRAG's position and, as a consequence, rebuilding a healthy working relationship with Wildlife & Countryside Link (see Action 3.3, above).

Both Kevin Watts and Mark Spencer offered to join the group, and another 2-3 UK BRAG members would be sought.

ACTION 7.1: The Secretariat to seek more volunteers from UK BRAG to join the group. Deadline: 20 December 2007.

ACTION 7.2: In consultation with Ant Maddock (BRIG/JNCC), Secretariat to set a date and location for the joint group workshop, and notify members by 18 January 2008.

8. EPBRS Update

Jo Myers gave a report on the recent meeting in Porto, *Life on the Blue Planet: Biodiversity Research and the new European Marine Policies*, and presented a draft statement which outlined the key policy-relevant marine biodiversity research needs.

ACTION 8.1: The Secretariat to issue the final statement from the Porto EPBRS meeting to all UK BRAG members, when this is agreed. Deadline: 11 January 2008.

The e-conference in preparation for the forthcoming Slovenian EPBRS Meeting was launched on 3 December 2007. The meeting will address the theme *Water for Life: Research Priorities for Sustaining Freshwater Biodiversity*.

ACTION 8.2: The Secretariat to e-mail both UK BRAG members and wider networks (including BES, via Ceri Margerison) notification of the e-conference for the Slovenian EPBRS meeting. Deadline: 10 December 2007.

Andrew Pullin asked what progress had been made with the National Reviews collated by the BioSTRAT Project in preparation for EPBRS meetings.

ACTION 8.3: Andy Stott to contact Allan Watt, to ask about the National Reviews (particularly the need for a review in preparation for the Slovenian Meeting). Deadline: 7 December 2007.

ACTION 8.4: The Secretariat to seek nominations for a freshwater specialist to join the UK delegation to the Slovenian Meeting, and notify Andy Stott and Allan Watt. Deadline: 14 December 2007.

9. BiodivERsA project update

Andy Stott provided an update on the ERA-Net, focusing on the Call for pre-proposals that was issued on 26 November 2007. UK funding has been provided by NERC (3M Euro) and Defra (1M Euro). In addition to the Call announcement on the project website <http://www.eurobiodiversa.org/>, the NERC website also carries details of the Call, making reference to the UK BRAG Summary Report as a useful source of policy-relevant research needs <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/themes/biodiversity/events/ao-biodiversa.asp>.

10. GBSC Report

The Secretariat gave a short presentation on the current activities of the Global Biodiversity Sub-Committee (GBSC):

- The joint Royal Society / GBSC workshop on biodiversity, climate change and human livelihoods
- The ocean acidification paper
- The MA workshop and follow-up actions
- The research needs of the UK Overseas Territories

ACTION 10.1: the Secretariat to put the paper onto the UK GECC website www.ukgecc.org, and send electronic copies to all UK BRAG members. Deadline: 20 December 2007.

ACTION 10.2: The Secretariat to identify the key individuals with responsibility for biodiversity conservation in the Crown Dependencies, and then draft a letter asking for research needs (mapping current activity and identifying gaps). Deadline: 25 January 2008.

11. Reports from UK BRAG sub-groups

Jo Myers presented the *Marine Goods & Services* sub-group report (BRAG 10/4), and asked for comments from UK BRAG members and the wider community.

ACTION 11.1: All members to send comments to Jo Myers (jo.myers@defra.gsi.gov.uk) by 11 January 2008.

ACTION 11.2: The Secretariat to circulate the report to JNCC marine advisers, and ask for comments to be sent to Jo Myers by 11 January 2008. Deadline: 14 December 2007.

ACTION 11.3: The Secretariat to send the paper to Ceri Margerison (BES), to forward to the BES Marine Advisory Group, asking for comments to be sent to Jo Myers by 11 January 2008. Deadline: 10 December 2007.

The intention is that a final version of the report will be prepared by the end of February 2008. It is hoped that this will then be published in *Bioscience*, as well as a report in a NERC publication. Both Defra and the BES websites might also be useful avenues in which to promote the sub-group's ideas.

The *Policy Benefit from Research* sub-group report was presented by Mark Stevenson. Feedback was sought on (1) the scope of the report (UK, Europe, global) and (2) plans for action.

Kevin Charman felt that it was unlikely that the UK BRAG sub-group would uncover any new/additional barriers to those already identified by the earlier ERFF study. Peter Costigan considered that there was no reason why biodiversity research should have any different barriers to those in other sectors, and a helpful approach would be to set the existing barriers into a biodiversity context, and see how they apply. Andrew Pullin suggested that UK BRAG needed to be clear about the intended target, i.e. what does the group want from the biodiversity conservation community and the UK BAP? Greg Mudge commented that the report needed to set out clear policy needs, as this would be a considerable help for the research community.

Careful thought needs to be given as to the audience for this work, and what can UK BRAG actually do about the issues identified. Peter Costigan suggested that the analysis of the barriers needs to be undertaken in both directions, i.e. policy influencing research, and research informing policy. Andy Stott reminded the group that the exercise needs to be within the context of the Biodiversity Partnership. Done properly, this exercise would help the

policy community to formulate policy. In conclusion, it was felt that the sub-group should focus on case studies rather than attempting to do everything.

ACTION 11.4: Andrew Pullin to circulate a paper on the NHS and heart disease to sub-group members (Paul Rose, Mark Stevenson, Allan Watt, Sallie Bailey), which has considered similar issues. Deadline: 20 December 2007.

ACTION 11.5: All UK BRAG members to send comments on the paper (BRAG 10/5) to Paul Rose by 11 January 2008.

12. Current issues / research needs of Country Biodiversity Groups

An update on the work of the England Biodiversity Group was provided. Work is progressing towards putting HAPs and SAPs into six broad, umbrella headings (e.g. agriculture, water & wetlands, woodlands, etc.). This will be helpful to UK BRAG in that it will identify more generic research issues. Climate change issues will be addressed through integration with these six groups.

Kevin Watts expressed concern that the six groupings still constituted a “silo” approach to conservation, and questioned whether a catchment scale would be more appropriate. In response, Andy Stott stated that the EBG was aware of the need to set these groupings at a landscape scale.

Defra has just awarded a contract to look at valuing the UK BAP.

13. AOB

The Secretariat notified the group of the European Commission’s call for evidence on *the economics of biodiversity loss* http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/call_evidence.htm. A Stern-style review is envisaged, to be carried out by an independent economist (to be appointed). The Review will evaluate the costs of the loss of biodiversity and the associated decline in ecosystem services worldwide, and aims to achieve a better understanding of why action to halt the loss of biodiversity would make economic sense.

Details of the Call for Evidence were circulated to the group, and UK BRAG members were left to consider whether they wished to engage with the process.

14. Date of next meeting

The 11th Meeting of UK BRAG will take place on either 3, 4 or 5 June 2008. The location is to be decided, and members will be notified in due course.

ACTION 14.1: All UK BRAG members to notify the Secretariat of their preferred date for the meeting. Deadline: 11 February 2008.

Summary of Action Points – 10th UK BRAG Meeting, 4 December 2007

Action Point No.	Description	Action For	Deadline
3.1	The Secretariat will circulate the GBSC mycology paper to all UK BRAG members, to raise awareness of the issues; Secretariat will ask for volunteers from both UK BRAG and GBSC to serve on a sub-group to consider taxonomic needs assessment and capacity across the UK.	Secretariat	20/12/07 11/01/08
3.2	UK BRAG members to provide the secretariat with a list of key contacts within their organisations, to form the basis of a circulation list.	UK BRAG members	11/01/08
3.3	Peter Costigan to contact Wildlife and Countryside Link, to invite them to continue as members of UK BRAG.	Peter Costigan	11/01/08
3.4	UK BRAG members to provide the secretariat with a list of key contacts within their communities (as opposed to their own organisations), to form the basis of a circulation list.	UK BRAG members	11/01/08
3.5	Summary paper in Journal of Applied Ecology – the Secretariat and Davy McCracken to discuss next steps, and agree a timetable for action.	Secretariat and Davy McCracken	18/01/08
3.6	Secretariat is asked to draft 3-4 paragraphs on the scope of the proposed paper, and discuss this with Davy McCracken.	Secretariat and Davy McCracken	11/01/08
3.7	Members are requested to notify the Secretariat of times/dates for key decisions in developing strategies of their organisations and, where possible, big, cross-organisational initiatives (i.e. thinking beyond their own organisations). Recognising that “moving targets” (i.e. rolling programmes, without fixed dates) make this a difficult action, the focus will be for major initiatives, only.	UK BRAG members	11/01/08
3.8	Secretariat is asked to produce a paper outlining the opportunities (timelines with key decision points) to inform and influence funders.	Secretariat	01/02/08
3.9	Secretariat to access both the NERC and BBSRC peer-review college members’ database, and contact those with biodiversity interest.	Secretariat	18/01/08
3.10	Andy Stott to send information on the BiodivERsA research database to the Secretariat, asking members to submit information on the research programmes of their organisations.	Andy Stott, plus UK BRAG members	01/02/08
4.1	Member organisations to consider whether, in principle, they would be prepared to contribute money in support of commissioned reviews, and notify the Secretariat.	UK BRAG members	01/02/08
4.2	The Secretariat to draft a framework and ask for contributions and comments, via e-mail consultation), and circulated to the wider UK BRAG for comments.	Secretariat	29/02/08 14/03/08

5.1	Peter Costigan to write to both SISB and NERC Council, sending copies of the UK BRAG summary report to all members.	Peter Costigan	07/01/08
6.1	The Secretariat to arrange a meeting of the Steering Committee in January/February 2008.	Secretariat	20/12/07
7.1	The Secretariat to seek more volunteers from UK BRAG to join the joint UK BRAG – BRIG group on UK BAP research.	Secretariat	20/12/07
7.2	In consultation with Ant Maddock (BRIG/JNCC), Secretariat to set a date and location for the joint group workshop, and notify members.	Secretariat	18/01/08
8.1	The Secretariat to issue the final statement from the Porto EPBRS meeting to all UK BRAG members, when this is agreed.	Secretariat	11/01/08
8.2	The Secretariat to e-mail both UK BRAG members and wider networks (including BES, via Ceri Margerison) notification of the e-conference for the Slovenian EPBRS meeting.	Secretariat	10/12/07
8.3	Andy Stott to contact Allan Watt, to ask about the National Reviews (particularly the need for a review in preparation for the Slovenian Meeting).	Andy Stott and Allan Watt	07/12/07
8.4	The Secretariat to seek nominations for a freshwater specialist to join the UK delegation to the Slovenian Meeting, and notify Andy Stott and Allan Watt.	Secretariat	14/12/07
10.1	The Secretariat to put the paper onto the UK GECC website www.ukgecc.org , and send electronic copies to all UK BRAG members.	Secretariat	20/12/07
10.2	The Secretariat to identify the key individuals with responsibility for biodiversity conservation in the Crown Dependencies, and then draft a letter asking for research needs (mapping current activity and identifying gaps).	Secretariat	25/01/07
11.1	All members to send comments on the <i>Marine Goods & Services</i> paper to Jo Myers (jo.myers@defra.qsi.gov.uk) by 11 January 2008.	UK BRAG members	11/01/08
11.2	The Secretariat to circulate the report to JNCC marine advisers, and ask for comments to be sent to Jo Myers by 11 January 2008.	Secretariat	14/12/07 11/01/08
11.3	The Secretariat to send the paper to Ceri Margerison (BES), to forward to the BES Marine Advisory Group, asking for comments to be sent to Jo Myers by 11 January 2008.	Secretariat	10/12/07 11/01/08
11.4	Andrew Pullin to circulate a paper on the NHS and heart disease to sub-group members (Paul Rose, Mark Stevenson, Allan Watt, Sallie Bailey), which has considered similar issues.	Andrew Pullin	20/12/07
11.5	All UK BRAG members to send comments on the <i>Policy benefit from research</i> paper (BRAG 10/5) to Paul Rose by 11 January 2008.	UK BRAG members	11/01/08
14.1	All UK BRAG members to notify the Secretariat of their preferred date for the meeting (3, 4 or 5 June 2008).	UK BRAG members	11/02/08