

Minutes

3rd Meeting of the UK Biodiversity Research Advisory Group

Thursday 10th June

**Central Science Laboratory
Sand Hutton, York**

Present: Richard Ferris (RF), Stephen Grady (SG), Paul Rose (PRs), Andy Stott (AS), Miles Parker (Chair), Peter Robertson (PRn), Niall Moore (NM), Sallie Bailey (SB), Charles Perrings (CP), Johannes Vogel (JV), Allan Watt (AW), Caroline Fenwick (CF), David Macdonald (DM), Sarah Webster (SW), Kevin Charman (KC), Brigid Primrose (BP), Jane Sears (JS), Mary Gibby (MG), Richard Brand-Hardy (RBH), Andrew Pullin (AP), Ian Bainbridge (IB), Steve Albon (SA).

Guests: Leonie Alexander (LA) & Lorna Edey (LE), The Wildlife Partnership

1. Apologies: Mark Bailey, Michael Usher, Scot Mathieson, Kevin Watts, Michel Kaiser, Paul Leonard, Andrew Jackson, Howard Platt, Geeta Wonnacott, Tony Hawkins, Martin Sharman, Davy McCracken, Tim Blackstock

Welcome

Sallie Bailey (Forestry Commission) and Brigid Primrose (SNH) were welcomed as new representatives, replacing Gordon Patterson and John Baxter, respectively.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

These were approved as an accurate account of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising

These were accepted as read, with Action Points 10.9 and 10.10 noted to be ongoing.

- *ACTION 3.1: PRs to keep BRAG members informed of key CBD/SBSTTA meetings and developments, reporting to the next BRAG meeting. BRAG members should contact PRs for information.*

4. Sub-group reports

4.1 Socio-economic issues sub-group report (Paper 3/2)

A summary was given of the research review exercise carried out by the sub-group. Inter-disciplinary working approaches and mechanisms were identified as being critical to the process. SEERAD and Defra expressed an interest in funding research topics identified. This item would be brought back for discussion at the next BRAG meeting.

- *ACTION 4.1: RF to send the socio-economic presentation to BRAG members.*
- *ACTION 4.2: CP/RF to complete editing of the full socio-economic research review paper, agree this with sub-group members, and make it available as a downloadable file from the UKBAP website.*

- *ACTION 4.3: all BRAG members to consider the relevances of the socio-economic research priorities for their own work programmes and contact RF to indicate any funding opportunities..*
- *ACTION 4.4: CP/RF to prepare a paper for the next meeting recommending next steps for promoting and implementing BRAG socio-economic research priorities*

4.2 Non-native species (Paper 3/3)

A short paper was presented. The special session on non-native species at the BES Annual Conference was noted. It was considered timely for the non-native species sub-group to reconvene, in order to review progress with ongoing projects and identify next steps, including possible co-funding arrangements. The sub-group should have access to socio-economic expertise. IB agreed to chair the sub-group.

- *ACTION 4.5: BRAG members were asked to inform the Secretariat of they have an interest in funding non-native species research;*
- *ACTION 4.6: IB/RF to reformulate the ToR of the non-native species sub-group.*
- *ACTION 4.7: RF and IB to reconvene the non-native species sub-group.*

4.3 Monitoring and management (Paper 3/4)

The meeting was updated on the result of discussions with BRIG over the formation of a joint sub-group. BRIG are occupied with the 2005 BAP reporting round and will be better placed to engage with BRAG about monitoring priorities for priority habitats and species in about 15 months. There was some concern that failure by BRIG or BRAG to take a lead was holding up progress. It was agreed that the two themes of monitoring and management should be addressed in separate sub-groups. PR agreed to chair the monitoring sub-group and KC and AP agreed to jointly lead the sub-group on management. It was agreed that there was an urgent need.

- *ACTION 4.8:PR/RF to draft terms of reference and convene a meeting of the sub-group within 3 months .*
- *ACTION 4.9: all BRAG members to submit nominations to the monitoring sub-group.*
- *ACTION 4.10: RF to contact BRIG and invite nominations to the monitoring sub-group.*
- *ACTION 4.11: AP/KC/RF to draft terms of reference and convene a meeting of the sub-group within 3 months .*
- *ACTION 4.12: all BRAG members to submit nominations to the management sub-group.*

4.4 Contract Report

LA/LE (*The Wildlife Partnership*) presented their Habitat Action Plans research management database. This was recognised as a useful resource, which would require analysis to inform priority-setting. As new entries continue to be submitted, it was suggested that the website should be kept open. The intention was to use this as a process rather than a final product. It was queried whether an analysis of the research gaps would be undertaken by the management sub-group? The issue of knowledge transfer at the end of this process is very important. The Forestry Commission have almost completed their guidance on the condition and monitoring of habitats. Such information could be used as a “best practice” guide, and could also help BRIG.

- *ACTION 4.13: The management sub-group to appraise the information provided in the database, carrying out some simple analyses, prior to dissemination to the wider community.*

6. Update on BRAG research catalogue

The *Biodiversity Research Catalogue* under development on the UKBAP website was introduced. Many websites include information on research beyond biodiversity, covering a great deal of environmental information. A keyword search facility and further links were needed. The usefulness of the European catalogue was questioned.

- *ACTION 6.1: all BRAG members to submit their views (and additional weblinks) on the research catalogue to RF, by 30th September.*
- *ACTION 6.2: RF to modify the research catalogue structure, to include a keyword search; and revise content in response to BRAG members' recommendations.*

7. Information exchange

7.1 UK

The meeting was given updates on the Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) Programme, and CEH's research priorities relating to biodiversity.

7.2 Europe & global

The meeting was updated on the Florence and Killarney meetings of the European Platform for Biodiversity Research Strategy (EPBRS), and the review of the *EU Biodiversity Strategy*.

- *ACTION 7.1: RF to direct BRAG members to the EPBRS website, to see the Killarney and Malahide papers.*

There was a need to review these papers and evaluate how BRAG's research priorities link up with the Killarney Declaration and the Message from Malahide, to ensure the UK's contribution to the 2010 target. It was important to consider the implications of the *EU Biodiversity Strategy* for the BRAG work programme.

- *ACTION 7.2: RF to carry out a comparison of the Killarney/Malahide recommendations with BRAG's priorities, produce a plan of action to ensure greater agreement, and present this to the 4th BRAG meeting.*

The Office of Science and Technology consultation over the EU 7th Framework Programme has a deadline of 26th July. BRAG organisations are invited to respond separately, but the meeting considered that a collective BRAG response should be made. It is vital that BRAG works to ensure that biodiversity is included in EU's FP7. A small drafting team was agreed, with AW, AS, PRn, and RF as members; to produce a short, draft report.

- *ACTION 7.3: RF to draft a framework for a BRAG response to the OST consultation on FP7, and convene a meeting of the drafting team. Submission due by 26th July.*

The role of the Global Environmental Change Committee (GECC) was explained. This group provides advice on priorities and capacity for UK research on climate change. The group's Terms of Reference have recently been reviewed and 5 sub-groups have been formed - 4 on climate change and 1 on international aspects of biodiversity. The Secretariat for the group will be provided by JNCC, and MP is expected to Chair the group.

An update was provided about the Paris conference on biodiversity science and governance, to be held between 24-28th January, 2005. The conference aims to bring science and policy together at a global scale.

- *ACTION 7.4: AS to circulate information on the Paris biodiversity conference to all BRAG members when this becomes available.*

7.3 BiodivERsA (Paper 3/7)

NERC and Defra are partners in BiodivERsA, an ERA-Net proposal for biodiversity research. The proposal had been rejected in the March call for proposals but will be re-submitted in September.

8. Funding BRAG Research (Paper 3/8)

A paper was presented, outlining some possible co-funding options for BRAG. This was discussed by the meeting, in particular the mechanisms to be used and how partnerships might be developed. There was general support for BRAG to concentrate efforts in promoting research priorities with research funders, rather than seeking to establish complex co-funding arrangements. BRAG should try to exert leverage over funding bodies; it was suggested that the Environment Research Funders' Forum (ERFF) is a key body for BRAG to influence. Given this emphasis, BRAG will need to consider the types of activities, outputs and materials it needs in order to be most influential.

- *ACTION 8.1: RF to establish stronger links between BRAG and ERFF (explore options for attending ERFF meetings as an observer body ?) and, prior to ERFF meetings, circulate agendas to all BRAG members (may need to be more targeted than this, also not sure how confidential agenda are) .*

9. Review of BRAG work programme

BRAG work programme was reviewed. It was asked whether 'Optimising tools to develop policy' should be left to the end of BRAG's programme of work ? This was seen as a vital cross-cutting theme, including many aspects of socio-economics. It was suggested that a spreadsheet should be issued in advance of BRAG meetings, showing a timetable for and progress of the work programme. The effectiveness of BRAG could be increased if it became aware of the review timetables for funding bodies, and linked its work to these (e.g. the Spending Review 2006). This could be built into the GANTT matrix. BRAG also needed to 'up its game' if it was to be effective in contributing to the 2010 target – to halt biodiversity loss.

- *ACTION 9.1: RF to produce a GANTT chart, or similar, showing key activities and deadlines for funders, in relation to BRAG work.*
- *ACTION 9.2: RF to meet with AS/MP/SW, to discuss BRAG progress and strategy.*
- *ACTION 9.3: RF to present a revised work programme and products for the 4th BRAG Meeting.*

10. BRAG communication

A number of issues were introduced for discussion, including a regular BRAG newsletter. There was a view from the meeting that this was unnecessary. There was wide support for a clear facility for information dissemination on the BRAG pages of the UKBAP website, where members could access the latest documents.

It was suggested that BRAG should make regular submissions to *Biodiversity News*.

- *ACTION 10.1: RF to ensure regular BRAG submissions to Biodiversity News.*
- *ACTION 10.2: RF to issue ppt slide on "communication in BRAG" to all BRAG members, and canvass opinions.*
- *ACTION 10.3: RF to set up a bulletin board on the website and notify BRAG members.*

11. AOB

NERC's call for 'Peer Review College and Affiliate College members' was announced, and BRAG members were encouraged to consider applications.

Date for next meeting

The next meeting should take place in late September, in London, starting at 1100. It was proposed to hold this meeting at one of Defra's offices.