

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group (UKPGRG) Meeting

DATE & TIME: Wednesday 16th July 2025, 08:30-10:30

LOCATION: Warwick Crop Centre, School of Life Sciences, University of Warwick
Innovation Campus, Stratford-upon-Avon and online

Nigel Maxted , Univ. of Birmingham (NM) (Chair)	Charlotte Allender , Univ. of Warwick (CHA)
Matt Ordidge , Univ. of Reading (MO)	Catrina Fenton , Garden Organic (CF)
Kalani Seymour , Plant Heritage (KS)	Sean May , Univ. of Nottingham (SM)
Clare Williams , Defra (CW)	Charlotte Lusty , Kew (CHL)
Lydia McKenzie , Defra (LM)	Lin Huang , Aberystwyth University (LH)
Debbie Kessell , SASA (DK)	Joe Taylor , JNCC (JT)
Gabrielle Clarke , Univ. of Birmingham (GC)	
Hannah-Rose Lindley , Univ. of Birmingham (HRL)	

25/10 Apologies

Apologies were received from Julian Hosking, Elizabeth Scott (NIAB), Felicidad Fernandes (NIAB), Lydia Smith (NIAB) and Noam Chayut (John Innes Centre).

25/11 Minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2024 (NM)

The minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

25/12 Actions and Matters arising (NM)

Item 23/28: Action Liz Scott: to follow up with Anthony Hopkins at BSPB

- **ACTION:** NM to email Anthony Hopkins.
- NM reached out to Anthony Hopkins and is awaiting a response.

Item 24/13: Liz Scott to send contacts at AFBI to NM via email following this meeting.

- **ACTION:** Defra to reach out to AFBI, and to cross reference contacts with EMS.
- Defra reached out to AFBI but did not receive a response. Defra shared central AFBI mailbox addresses with Elizabeth Scott (EMS, NIAB).

Item 25/04 UK Biodiversity Indicator on Plant Genetic Resources

- **ACTION:** Any interested UKPGR members to submit a response to the UKBI survey by 16 May 2025.
- **ACTION:** JT and RD to discuss a revised domesticated PGRI outside of the meeting.
- **ACTION:** JT to discuss the viability of a working group producing a PGRI, with the responsible statistician at Defra.
- JT provided an update during item 25/13.

Item 25/05 GRACE-RI

- **ACTION:** NM to send an email seeking clarity on GRACE-RI to PRO-GRACE coordinator.
- NM shared PRO GRACE coordinator response via UKPGR group mailing list on 17 March 2025.

25/13 UK Biodiversity Indicator on Plant Genetic Resources (NM/JT)

JT presented an update on the UK Biodiversity Indicator on Plant Genetic Resources (UKBI PGR), including:

- A summary of the updates and feedback provided during the last UKPGRG meeting.
- UKBI PGR user survey results from 76 respondents demonstrated that users regard the PGR indicator as having high importance.
- Going forward the UKBI PGR webpage will be retained, without a data update in 2025, pending development of an alternative indicator. UKBI PGR team are keen to hear ideas for developing

the alternative indicator in advance of the next Biodiversity Indicator Steering Group meeting in February 2026.

ACTION: UKPGRG to submit an indicator proposal to UKBI PGR team by end of November.

The group noted the continuance of the UKBI PGR as positive news considering the UKBI PGR is the only national PGR indicator within the UK.

NM shared a presentation on the current PGR biodiversity indicator and ideas for an alternative indicator.

The group discussed the following:

- The scope of the UKBI PGR needs to be confirmed to align with the UKPGRG indicator proposal and produce an indicator that can be reported on by the JNCC.
- Suggestion to present the reporting data from multiple perspectives. For example, distribution vs use, or research vs modelling. These data could be taken from organisations' annual reports.
- The importance of Defra and JNCC meeting during the preparation of any potential UKPGRG indicator proposal to discuss the robustness of the reporting statistics.
- The importance of the indicator having JNCC and Defra backing, including for the indicator to be potentially used as official statistics by Defra.
- What plants should the indicator cover? Organisations including Plant Heritage and their Threatened Plant Programme could provide data on other plants than for food and agriculture. The Global Biodiversity Framework refers to cultivated plants which includes food, agriculture and horticulture; and horticulture includes production and amenity. The group agreed it needs to understand what the UKBI PGR needs to report on, to decide what subset of plants the indicator proposal should cover.
- Meaningful data was highlighted as being essential to the indicator. While the indicator proposal must be submitted by November 2025, the sources of data can be agreed afterwards.
- To date, the indicator has focused on data published to the European Search Catalogue for Plant Genetic Resources (EURISCO). Not all genebanks submit all their data to EURISCO. An exercise for genebanks to submit all their data was suggested as a way to have a more representative data source.
- The group queried whether data that is not in the public domain and cannot be submitted to EURISCO should be reported on nationally to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Issues of practicality and plant variety rights including availability and phytosanitary issues were also raised.
- Taxon level is also important to consider; as well as consistency for taxon level between organisations and the types of collections being considered within indicator reporting data.
- Conservation status, Standard Material Transfer Agreement data, distribution statistics from other genebanks, usage of material, availability, native and non-native status were also suggested as important to consider.
- Aberystwyth University has been commissioned by Defra to develop a UKPGR Inventory database which could be utilised by the indicator.

JT noted that:

- The drivers of the UKBI are primarily for international reporting, but high domestic take-up including in policy is also important.
- The UKBI are collaboratively published by Defra and JNCC, overseen by the lead statistician at Defra.

ACTION: LH to set up a meeting with the UKPGR group to agree the data that will be included in the UK PGR inventory database.

ACTION: Defra and JNCC to meet to discuss the indicator development and reporting statistics.

ACTION: JT to set up a meeting with the UKPGR group to follow up on the UKBI PGR proposal development.

25/14 Varietal certification sample availability (NM)

ACTION: NM to present this item at the October 2025 UKPGRG meeting to discuss the topic when NIAB are present.

DK noted that holding the certification seed samples for longer than 3 years is unlikely to be possible.

CL highlighted that previously some material has been received from the certification samples and conserved by genebanks. Unless the genebanks were able to contact the original donor, the material was not made publicly available.

25/15 Defra Update (CW)

CW provided the following updates:

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA):

The next Governing Body meeting is in Peru in November and Defra will provide an overview of the agenda items at the next UKPGR group meeting in October. The fourteenth meeting of Multilateral System (MLS) of access and benefit-sharing Working Group (WG) met in Peru on 7th to 11th July 2025. The UK did not attend the meeting and the report for the recent WG meeting has not been published yet, however the negotiating draft text can be found [here](#).

The group discussed the following:

- What is the definition of digital sequence information/genetic sequence data and is it retrospective?
- A need for a definition of what's used for food and agriculture was highlighted as important for the amendment to Annex 1.
- It was queried whether there is an obligation to use the Standard Material Transfer Agreement (SMTA). Additionally, it was noted that model organisms and wild relatives could be affected by the use of an SMTA.

Crop Wild Relative (CWR) and Landrace (LR) inventory project:

The team at the University of Birmingham will present a project update at the UKPGRG meeting in October 2025.

Horizon Europe:

Defra shared information by email about Horizon Europe Cluster 6 2025 and 2026 Work Programmes.

The EU's 10th Research and Innovation Framework Programme ("FP10") will succeed Horizon Europe in 2028. Currently, the Commission is expected to publish its proposals for a new European Competitiveness Fund and for FP10 on 16 July. The shape and scale of programmes will emerge through 2026, with the final legislative proposals to be adopted by end 2027.

NM requested a list of the programmes and scale of FP10.

ACTION: Defra to ask Chris Barker for a list of programmes and scale of FP10.

Inventory for CWR and LR database project:

Defra is commissioning Aberystwyth University to develop a UK national inventory database for CWR and LR to catalogue the plant genetic diversity and passport information from different accession/population, varieties, species and wild relatives. The project will start in 2026/27 financial year.

UKRI BBSRC PhenomUK Infrastructure Fund bid:

PhenomUK are submitting a bid for the establishment of a nationwide distributed research infrastructure for plant and crop phenotyping.

The group discussed that some members of the UKPGRG and their wider organisations will be attending PhenomUK's Plant Phenomics Conference at the beginning of September.

25/16 GRACE RI (NM)

The GRACE RI infrastructure project has been extended by 6 months until October 2025. NM highlighted that the contribution towards a funding bid could be used for other purposes.

25/17 BBRSC Network application update (NM)

A collective of UKPGRG members submitted a BBRSC Network application which scored well but was unsuccessful. The group highlighted that the work produced for the application could be used to inform future applications including information on artificial intelligence in databasing and coordinating between different biobanks.

25/18 PGR applications / Project updates (All)

The group shared applications and project updates.

25/19 AOB (NM)

CA updated the group that the UK Vegetable Genebank were able to respond to UK government request to send material to Svalbard Genebank.

KS highlighted that the UKPGRG should maintain focus on sustainability including methods of transport and reusable coffee cups.

25/20 Date of next meeting – October 2025 (NM)

ACTION: LM to set up a doodle poll to agree the next meeting date.