

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group

Meeting on Wednesday 15th March 2017
Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London

Nigel Maxted, University of Birmingham (Chair; NM)
Charlotte Allender, University of Warwick (CA)
Matt Ordidge, University of Reading (MO)
James Armitage, RHS (JA)
Neil Munro, Garden Organic (NeMu)
Tom Christie, SASA (TC)
Simon Toomer, National Trust (ST) (dial in)
Kim Bridger, Defra (KB)
Charlotte Petersen, Defra (CP)

Holly Kelley-Weil (Defra) (HW)
Lydia Smith, NIAB (LS)
Milika Buurman, Limagrain (MB)
Sean May, University of Nottingham (SM)
Mike Ambrose, JIC (MA)
Julian Hosking, (JH) (dial in)
Sue Goligher, Defra (SG)
Chris Barker, Defra (CB)
Richard Littleton, Defra (RL)

17/01 Apologies (NM)

Jeremy Clitherow (NE), Penny Maplestone (BSPB), Peter Hoebe (SRUC), Adrian Turner (JIC), Abi Johnson (EMR), Ian Mackay (NIAB), Ianto Thomas (aber), Andrew Daymond (University of Reading), Frances Gawthrop (Tozer Seeds), Amanda Read (BBSRC), John Dickie (Kew), Felicidad Fernandez (EMR), Gerard Hoppe (Afbini)

17/02 Minutes of the meeting held on 5th October (NM)

Minutes of previous meeting agreed.

17/03 Matters arising (NM)

NM mentioned item 5 under 15/35 (Brexit) from the previous meeting. NM felt that raising awareness of the importance of Plant Genetic Resources in the UK needs to be taken forward. He recently received an email from the UK Farm Animal Genetic Resources (FAnGR) committee on the need to raise awareness and possible opportunities to do this jointly.

ACTION Defra: include an item on ideas for raising awareness about use/value of genetic resources on the next meeting's agenda.

SG mentioned that she thought Tom Brigstocke (chair of FAnGR) planned to have an additional chat with NM. MB mentioned another opportunity for awareness raising of PGR through a newly formed Agri-Brexit Coalition.

ACTION MB: send information on the Agri-Brexit Coalition to the group

17/04 UK Landrace Conservation and Use Concept Note (NM)

NM stated that he has had 3-4 more email exchanges with Michael Whitehead. These emails have expressed varying degrees of support, but no actions have come from it. NM therefore suggested to take this item off the agenda. MO agreed that it is not necessary to keep it as a standing agenda item, but that it should be resurrected if necessary.

ACTION Defra: remove UK Landrace Conservation and Use Concept Note as standing agenda item.

17/05 Orchard network update (MO/JH)

MO reported that the Orchard Network have previously had a hugely successful meeting and that a subsequent meeting is planned for late March. MO sees this as a good way of bringing orchard groups together and mentioned the Genetic Fingerprinting efforts that have been made by the network. The aim of the next meeting is to gain an understanding of the Orchard Networks overall position and how to move forward. MO is keen to acknowledge the network through links to the National Collection. MO mentioned the lack of a national list for orchards and that right now NFC is the UK's national list and it is therefore valuable that the wider community can feed into this. The larger organisations involved are Reading/NFC, The National Trust, and Peoples Trust for Endangered Species. Most other organisations are local groups.

17/06 Defra genebank review (SG/CP)

SG explained that Defra have undertaken a genebank review in response to budget pressures the Department are under. Some savings have been identified and Defra are working with genebank managers to realise these. Going forward Defra will engage in discussions with other organisations and bodies with the aim to identify more sustainable long-term solutions. In December Defra met with AHDB to gather interest for engagement and funding. AHDB offered to help promote utilisation of plant genetic resources and mentioned that they are in a position to set up discussions with industry.

ACTION Defra: circulate a short summary of the main findings of the genebank review.

17/07 EU Exit

NM did not think there were further issues to discuss; although the new grouping mentioned under 17/03 (Matters Arising) will be beneficial. NM mentioned that the research community appeared disorganised and there is a lack of systematic lobbying. LS commented that it would be interesting to know if Defra are lobbying and making PGR views felt with respect to being aligned to H2020. NM mentioned that he has just put in application to H2020 and that this will stand out as a British led application. LS commented that H2020 is only one fund and that beyond this there needs to be regional development and interaction with industry. The group were interested to know where Defra stand regarding H2020 and funding. SG commented that there are ongoing wider discussions taking place and that funding will likely form part of Government's wider strategy.

17/08 Nagoya Protocol (KB)

KB mentioned that she is the current ABS focal point for UK, but that she is leaving Defra. Therefore HW who is the CBD focal point will be the central contact for ABS issues.

KB gave an update on work happening following the international meeting in December in Mexico. Use of digital sequencing of genetic information was discussed at the meeting and a two year process to consider implications has been started, which Parties will be asked to input on. Regarding EU Exit KB is engaging with the ABS stakeholder forum to identify what can be done differently regarding the ABS EU regulation. KB asked for any input on this by 31 March.

MA asked when guidelines for collections might appear. KB responded that experts to draft them are still being sought.

NM questioned the second actions point 15/36 from the previous PGR meeting regarding indicators.

ACTION Defra: HW to look into indicators developed by UNEP-WCMC, find out what happened to these and why they are not being used.

ACTION Defra: CP to forward email Kim sent out previously on ABS.

17/09 Plant Treaty update (SG)

SG reported that she had attended a meeting of the EU group of experts considering the European Regional group position on proposed changes to the multilateral system. This meeting was gearing up to the Plant Treaty Governing body in the autumn which will be aiming for a better, revised SMTA. However, SG mentioned that there are still further discussions to be held over the summer regarding a revised SMTA. MA asked whether there seemed to be appetite for change. SG responded that there is appetite to get it completed but recognise that this will require a lot of work. MA mentioned that an extended scope for Annex I is advantageous but needs to be monitored as there are possible implications.

ACTION Defra: SG to check if discussions relate to in situ as well as ex situ

17/10 PGR applications/project news (NM)

Each member of the UKPGR group gave an update on current projects and activities. NeMu mentioned that it was his last day working for Garden Organic. ST is new to the group and explained his role and work.

ACTION NeMU: pass on contact details of who will take over.

ACTION ST: give talk at summer meeting.

17/11 Update on European funding opportunities (CB)

NM: mentioned that those who apply for EU funding were concerned about the post Brexit situation. Countries outside the EU can apply for EU funding and he wanted to know if there had been discussion within UK Govt to ensure UK researchers can continue to apply for funding in the future.

CB gave the group an overview of the situation on EU funding. He commented that BEIS have the overall lead on H2020 and that they have been working with DExEU on what the future options might be. The importance of the UK science based is recognised in objective 10 of the 12 negotiating objectives for Brexit announced in January. We want to continue to collaborate with European partners on science and research as we exit the EU.

ACTION Defra: CB to feed back to BEIS the views expressed by the meeting on both the importance of science and funding and the concerns of universities. CB will also look out for funding options from the Global Challenge Research Fund and Newton Fund and share with the group as appropriate.

17/12 Awareness raising/opportunities, including Natural Capital Committee (NM/JH)

JH highlighted that it is his personal opinion that Plant Genetic Resources should be recognised as part of Natural Capital. He felt this needs to be pursued with the Natural Capital Committee (NCC) directly to ensure PGR is taken seriously.

ACTION Defra: make contact with the NCC secretariat and keep NM and JH updated on outcome.

ACTION JH: JH to send around link on Natural Capital Committee

17/13 Membership of the UKPGR group (NM)

It was agreed that the group should include key stakeholders but avoid lobbying activities. Any request for new membership should continue to be considered on an ad hoc – case by case-basis and be discussed by the whole group at meetings.

17/14 Summer technical meeting

The meeting will take place in June/July with a formal meeting in the morning and a tour of facilities in the afternoon. Place, date and time TBC.

ACTION JA: confirm availability of RHS venue for summer technical meeting.

17/15 AOB

LS mentioned a NIAB led PGR journal that now has an impact factor. The journal has specific focused special issues – the next one is on legumes. LS encouraged the group to contact the journal if they have ideas or pressing issues that could be addressed.

17/16 Date of next meeting (NM)

Wednesday 18 October at 12:00 noon.