

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group Meeting
DATE & TIME: Thursday 24th March 2022, 10am – 13:00pm
LOCATION: MS Teams

Nigel Maxted , Univ. of Birmingham (NM – Chair)	John Dickie , Kew (JD)
Charlotte Allender , Uni. of Warwick (CA)	Noam Chayut , JIC (NC)
Chris Byrne , Scottish Government (CB)	Steve Morgan , Defra (SM)
Lin Huang , Aberystwyth University (LH)	Helen Riordan , Defra (HR)
Frances Gawthrop , Tozer Seeds (FG)	Elizabeth Scott , NIAB (ES)
Felicidad Fernandez , NIAB EMR (FF)	Caroline Liddell , Defra (CL)
Catrina Fenton , Garden Organic (CF)	Solomy Nantege , Defra (SN)
Kalani Seymour , Plant Heritage (KS)	Lydia Smith , NIAB EMR (LS)
Matt Ordidge , Univ. of Reading (MO)	Vicki Cooke , Plant Heritage (VC)
Sean May , Univ. of Nottingham (SM)	

22/01 Apologies (NM)

Glenn Bryan – JHI, James Williams – JNCC, Lesley McCarthy – SASA, Julian Hosking, Amelia Greenham – Defra

The meeting was chaired by Nigel Maxted (NM).

22/02 Minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2021 (NM)

The group agreed that the minutes from the previous meeting reflected a true and accurate account of proceedings.

22/03 Actions and Matters arising (NM)

CL – the Nature Strategy will likely be cut down to a paragraph which will be included in the Defra 25-year environment plan refresh, but the policy team is looking at developing a more detailed standalone strategy on genetic resources soon. The group was disappointed about the Nature Strategy but looked forward to working with the policy team to develop a GR strategy.

22/04 Update on Agriculture Bill Scheme work (CL)

We have received funding for a rapid evidence assessment report on the environmental benefits of native breeds of livestock, crop wild relatives and landraces which will hopefully support the inclusion of schemes for these genetic resources under ELMs. We will work with the task and finish group on what should be included in the report. Members include Nigel, Julian & Lydia but anyone who would like to contribute to these discussions should contact Amelia. There is also the option of working with the Future Farming & Countryside Programme (FFCP) team to develop standalone schemes should we not be included in ELMs.

Action: [CL to communicate dates when this work is picked up](#)

NM has joined the ELMs Committee but has signed a non-disclosure agreement and is therefore unsure of how much he is allowed to share with this group but aims to push its agenda to the Committee.

22/05 Phytosanitary requirements post-Brexit (CL)

A meeting was held in January 2022 to discuss phytosanitary certification requirements for material exported to the EU. The session was led by Jason Pollock who remains available to answer questions.

Action: [CL to share Jason's presentation with those who attended the meeting.](#)

CA – APHA had agreed to test all crops in the collection and issue certificates for seeds from those tested crops instead of testing each seed sample. However, they will now test 10% of an order meaning all EU consignments have to be tested before a certificate can be issued, undoing any progress previously achieved. So, a plant health officer from University of Warwick will be consulting colleagues in the same field, potentially from this group, for advice.

FF – they have failed to export material due to APHA and FERA not providing one of the required tests, yet NIAB EMR who are able to carry out the test are not and cannot be accredited to do so.

JD – Kew to hold discussions with APHA to voice their concerns. Also, some EU countries make exemptions if the receiving institute intends to use the material for research instead of commercial purposes.

[Action: Those affected to liaise with CA to collate the group's concerns for submission to the relevant Defra teams for the appropriate course of action.](#)

22/06

Research Infrastructure Call (JD)

Several organisations were invited to submit proposals for EU funding for a genetic resources research infrastructure bid. However, the unclear UK status in Horizon Europe and the bid's broad remit cast doubt on the benefits of their participation.

NM – The EU-funded infrastructure has been agreed and NM is involved in one of the seven work packages (In-situ and Ex-situ conservation). Giovanni Giuliano, who is behind the project, was disappointed to hear that Kew would not participate but JD confirmed discussions were ongoing to consider their potential involvement. NM encouraged the group to participate in EU projects where possible to fill the evident gap.

22/07

Update on GE Bill/SI (Steve Morgan – Defra)

The government response to the GE consultation published in September 2021, [here](#), detailed the stepwise approach to be taken when introducing changes to the regulation of genetic technologies such as gene editing. The first step will work to reduce the regulatory requirements on gene edited plants and the second will seek to revise the definition of a GMO. Stakeholder events are being held to help inform policy development.

[Action: Secretariat to circulate Steve's presentation.](#)

22/08

Update on GINs (Helen Riordan – Defra)

There are four Defra-funded Genetic Improvement Networks ([VeGIN](#), [OREGIN](#), [PCGIN](#) and [WGIN](#)) aimed at encouraging collaborative research and ensuring the information produced is accessible to industry and breeders to help improve productivity and resilience in the UK plant sector. Some of these GINs have had international collaborators to offer a broader context. The current programme runs until March 2023, but there is potential for it to be extended.

22/09

DE funded CWR data collation for EURISCO (NM)

NM is involved in a German government-funded project involving several EU countries to develop an accessible inventory of in-situ crop wild relatives on [EURISCO](#). NM has also acquired funding from Defra and Natural England which will be used to further develop the in-situ conservation of CWRs in the UK. He encouraged this group's involvement, particularly the key genebank managers and he will contact them in due course.

22/10

PGR applications/ Project updates (All)

Each member of the UKPGR group gave an update on current projects and activities they were undertaking.

22/11

Summer Technical meeting

NC (JIC) and GB (JHI) are unable to host the summer technical meeting as previously planned due to other commitments, but NC offered to host next year's meeting (2023). FF and LS volunteered to host the group in Autumn and will liaise with the policy team to organise.

Action: Secretariat to circulate a doodle poll with potential dates. Update – 13th & 14th September are the favourites.

22/12

AOB (NM/All)

SM requested a Defra update on the Nagoya Protocol and Digital Sequencing Information. NC mentioned that he sits on the DSI expert panel which is helping Defra shape the UK's approach for negotiation and is happy to feedback this group's views to the panel. Also, the group agreed to Feli's recommendation for a simplified guide on the Nagoya Protocol to be made available for ease of comprehension.

Actions:

- CL to share the updates from the relevant Defra teams.

22/13

Date of next meeting (NM) – NM suggested moving the next main meeting to November 2022. It will be held in person at Defra offices, but MS Teams will be available for those unable to travel.