

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group

Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 22 October 2014, Room 626 London Millbank, 17 Smith Square, London

Nigel Maxted (NM)
Mike Ambrose, JIC (MA)
Mercy Morris, Plant Heritage (MM)
Adrian Turner, JIC (AT)
Penny Maplestone, BSPB (PM)
Ruth Eastwood, MSB (RE)
Charlotte Allender, University of Warwick (CA)
Matt Ordidge, University of Reading (MO)

Abi Johnson, EMR (AJ)
Lydia Smith, NIAB TAG (LS)
Sean May, University of Nottingham (SM)
Julian Hosking, NE (JH)
Julian Jackson, Defra (JJ)
Neil Munroe, Heritage Seed Library (NMu)
Sarah Cunningham, Defra (SC)
Chris Raper, NHM (CR)

Simon Linington retired from Kew and NM thanked him for his contribution to the UKPGR Group.

14/18 Apologies (NM)

Ianto Thomas, IBERS
Milika Buurman
Tom Christie, SASA

Gavin Ramsey, James Hutton Institute
Frances Gawthrop, A.L. Tozer Ltd.

14/19 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2014 (NM)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

14/20 Matters arising (NM)

The GRFA portal was discussed. It is not been updated since 2003.

Dfid attendance at the UKPGR group meetings was discussed. LS suggested contacting Prof Tim Wheeler (University of Reading), or Prof Wayne Powell about this. MA suggested contacting a Dfid representative that is involved with Darwin Initiative.

sMTA outstanding item – JJ is awaiting a response from the legal team.

Action:

Defra: Email the group in advance of the next meeting to prompt everyone to look at the GRFA portal so comments/concerns can be raised at the next meeting, and a final decision on whether to retain the portal can be made.

14/21 UK Landrace Conservation and use Concept Note (NM/JJ)

JJ met with Clarence House in the summer and they indicated that they are supportive of the project (and this support could be used to open doors), but they would not be willing to provide funding directly. Defra could provide funding for producing a business case for this project, but JJ/NM are not supportive of this approach.

Other funding opportunities and projects were discussed. MO suggested that the group should reconvene more regularly to discuss project proposals and ensure that links are made between projects where appropriate.

DCMS set the direction of lottery spending, and JH indicated that the Heritage Lottery Fund are looking at how they should engage beyond their current 'heritage' criteria and this may offer opportunities for genetic resources.

Actions:

JJ: identify appropriate DCMS contact

JH: lead on planning, and producing a presentation on genetic resources for DCMS

14/22 Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol (JJ)

JJ gave an update on the CBD COP MOP that he attended last week. The following were agreed:

- A compliance mechanism for addressing Party non-compliance with the obligations of the Protocol, and involvement of local communities in this process.
- Minimum requirements for the clearing house mechanism.

At an EU level: We are awaiting publication by the Commission of draft Implementing Acts to provide secondary EU legislation for the EU ABS Regulation that took effect when the Nagoya Protocol entered into force on the 12th October. These implementing acts (and the UK's implementing legislation) will provide further details for the articles of the EU legislation that do not take effect for a further year. Stakeholder consultation will be undertaken once the Commission has published/ circulated their approach and ahead of the Committee negotiation process to finalise these Acts (expected to start in December). EU regulation covers physical access to a genetic resource (not informatic), but national regulation may address this.

A Dutch & German breeders consortium has made a legal appeal against the EU regulation, and Plant Breeders Rights is their main concern.

MA said that guidelines need to also be produced (for all users) in parallel to getting official authority in place.

14/23 Updating the UK National Inventory and EURISCO (MA)

MA said that dataset requests will be sent out at the end of November.

14/24 Coverage of current in situ and ex situ PGR activities in UK (JH)

JH asked the group whether it would be possible to get to a place where we can summarise the total state of our in-situ and ex-situ collections in the UK? MA stated that there is not compiled central point, and a more focused discussion would be needed if we want to move towards this. NM agreed with MA and added that this would require considerable work and financial funding. MM stated that that Plant Heritage are currently undertaking a gap analysis of their collection.

14/25 Dialogue between Ex Situ collections / Defra over germplasm export in England / Wales (MA)

MA shared his concerns regarding ex-situ collections engagement with PHSI in relation to seed inspections. Seed certificates are only valid for 2 years, and consequently JIC are required to send off seed for assessment every 2 years, despite JIC seeds being guaranteed viable for 25 years. This process has become more rigorous in the last year and there is now a significant backlog. The system is aimed at seed producers and it is not working effectively enough for scientific samples. MA has been noting how long it takes to process material, and he would like to discuss this issue with Nicola Spence (Chief Plant Health Officer) as a group. CA & RE stated their support for this proposal. PM stated that this is also an issue for industry and many companies export through Holland and Germany as UK operations are too slow.

The National Fruit Collection are planning to contact PHSI to discuss disease testing, and JJ suggested that NFC & UKPGR need to be aware of each other's issues so that we can adopt a more strategic approach within Defra w.r.t. genetic resources.

Actions:

RE: send MA name of senior PHSI person that you met with recently

MA: represent UKPGR group in discussions with PHSI

14/26 ECPGR Update (JJ)

We are entering a new phase of re-nominating Chairs. Going forward there will not be any funded meetings, and so Chairs will need to work with people remotely. JJ encouraged people to get involved with these working groups.

UK Chairs:

MA will continue as Chair of the Grain Legumes Working Group, but he will be stepping down after this term

NM will continue as Chair of the Wild Species and Genetic Reserve Working Group
CA will continue as Chair of the Umbellifer Crop Working Group

ECPGR draft concepts:

In situ conservation of crop wild relatives – led by Nigel Maxted

Paper was circulated to National Co-ordinators and NM has received detailed feedback from 5 countries (most countries are supportive). NM has been asked to revise the document based on feedback.

On-farm management and conservation of landraces - led by Valeria Negri

This paper is considered disparate and very few countries support the content. MA highlighted the complementarity of the two papers and suggested that NM works with Valeria to ensure that the On Farm work is continued. NM has arranged to meet Valeria & Bert (NL)

Defra: send the group a list of all the Working Groups so that people can select which ones they would like to be part of.

14/27 Feedback on Plant Treaty (JJ)

Work is underway to enhance the functioning of the multilateral system of access and benefit-sharing. A number of studies were published last week on the impacts of a number of potential changes. As this process develops JJ will be coming to the group more generally to discuss proposals.

GCDT: Divseek white paper was published in the summer. The intention of this initiative is to create a coordinated database that characterises the crop diversity stored in the world's genebanks. It is just a white paper at the moment and we will need to ensure that this project is funded and undertaken by the right people. CA stated that letters have been sent out requesting people to come forward if they would like to be part of the consortium.

14/28 PGR applications/project news (NM)

MA:

- Online system scheduled for mid December

MM:

- Plant Heritage have reviewed threatened plants projects and they will concentrate on UK plant genera going forward.
- PH are currently undertaking an oral history project.

RE:

- Kew are going through a science restructure, and a strategy will be launched early next year.
- 5 partners have started collecting material for CWR project
- Looking to use Genysys to replace their portal
- UK National Tree Seed Project is in its second year and going well.
- Kew will launch a MSc Plant and Fungal Taxonomy, Diversity and Conservation in 2015

CA:

- Submitted a Horizon 2020 (7a) application and a Darwin Initiative application (Zambia landrace project), but both were unsuccessful
- Submitted a tender to Defra to continue Veg GIN
- A MSc student project on carrot CWR has been undertaken and it is hoped that it will be taken forward as a PhD project

MO

- Involved with the AEGIS funding initiative
- On the periphery of a German led Horizon 2020 bid which links with the Malus project

LS

- NIABTAG have had successes with BBSRC working on wheat CWR.

- There has been lots of breeder interest in work at the Innovation Farm, NIABTAG are now planning for Sept 2015
- PGR Secure conference was hosted at NIABTAG farm. Waitrose have shown an interest in Potato Onions were on display.

JJ:

- Preparatory action looking at PGR questionnaire that we have been sent. JJ & NM encouraged the group to complete this, and NM stated that contributors will probably be invited to a follow-up conference
- Milan Expo 2015 theme is feeding the world. It will run for 6 months and stalls will change each month. Funding is available but it is not fully funded

NM:

- PGR Secure finished at the end of Oct and they are writing the final report.
- New project on red listing of CWR (funded by government of Abu Dhabi) has been initiated
- Horizon 2020 7a application went through to the second round
- Involved in 2 Horizon 2020 7b consortiums

14/29 Harvesting Diversity II (NM)

A joint meeting was held with animal and microbe community to discuss mutual benefits of working together in 2001. But subsequently the three communities have worked largely independently NM suggested we ask the AnGR if they would be interested in another meeting to discuss closer collaboration. NM and JH will raise it at the next AnGR meeting.

Action NM / JH: Attend the next FAnGR meeting and raise issue

14/30 BBRSC Ex Situ Collections Review Update (MA, SM)

A draft has been compiled but it has not been reviewed.

Action: MA agreed to follow-up

14/31 Summer Technical Visit (NM)

Only two of these meetings have occurred in the past 6 years. The group discussed the value of these meetings, and how to increase attendance. NM suggested holding 3 UKPGR meetings a year, and making one of these an all-day meeting (am focused on the meeting, and pm dedicated to the site). Decision held until March meeting. NAIB was offered as a venue.

14/32 AOB (NM)

MO brought up responding to the white paper on AEGIS and the European collection, and NM suggested putting together a national response.

JJ informed the group that Defra are currently working on a UK Country Report on the State of the Worlds Biodiversity of Food and Agriculture

14/33 Date of next meeting (NM)

Wednesday 25th March

14/34 Presentation by Hannah Fielder (University of Birmingham) on Progress with CWR Conservation in the UK