

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group

Minutes of meeting on Wednesday 5 October 2016 Defra, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London

Nigel Maxted, University of Birmingham (Chair; NM)
Milika Buurman, Limagrain, and also representing BSPB (MB)
Chris Cockel, Kew (CC)
Matthew Ordidge, University of Reading (MO)
Andrew Daymond, University of Reading (AD)
Sean May, University of Nottingham (SM)
Charlotte Allender, University of Warwick (CA)
Adrian Turner, JIC (AT)
Mike Ambrose, JIC (MA)
Julian Hosking (JH)

Feli Fernandez, NIAB EMR (FF)
Lesley McCarthy, SASA (LM)
Jeremy Clitherow, Natural England (JC)
Abi Johnson, NIAB EMR (AJ)
James Armitage, RHS (JA)
Neil Munro, Garden Organic (NMun)
Gerard Hoppe, AFBINI (GH)
Kim Bridger, Defra (Nagoya only - KB)
Chris Barker, Defra (H2020 only – CB)
Sarah Cunningham, Defra (SC)
Charlotte Petersen, Defra (CP)

16/30 **Apologies (NM)**

Penny Maplestone, Ianto Thomas, Tom Christie, Glenn Bryan, Peter Hoebe, John Dickie, Lydia Smith

15/31 **Minutes of the meetings held on 9th March and 7th July (NM)**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

15/32 **Matters arising (NM)**

NM updated the group on the on farm concept note paper (**15/24**). The paper is ready to be approved by the Steering Committee but there is some disagreement around authorship. ECPGR do not want an author.

NM: gave a presentation to Defra's Farm Animal genetic Resources (FAnGR) Committee to try and stimulate collaboration between the groups. The FAnGR committee were supportive and the chair of the group agreed to follow-up but **NM** hasn't heard anything since.

ACTION DEFRA: Contact FAnGR Secretariat re. collaboration

NM undergraduate students will be working with NE to produce a priority CWR field guide (app, and printed guide if funding is available)

ACTION DEFRA: Contact NE re. arable flora app to see if same platform can be used for CWR app

15/33 **UK Landrace Conservation and use Concept Note (JH/JJ)**

NM reported that there are ongoing discussions regarding inventory for landraces. Update: two years ago approached His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales, and during these discussions, the Prince's Trust was very positive in supporting landraces. Six months ago Michael Whitehead replied to further enquiries, and was in the process of finding support (from Defra, Garden Organic, and Global Crop Diversity Trust). **NM** received a response from MW early October (2016) stating that letters have been sent out and he had received positive responses. The next step is for Michael Whitehead to set up a meeting w/ Prince Charles to discuss the project.

MO and **MA** agreed that fruit and vegetable collections need to be dealt with in parallel, but they need different approaches for conservation so they should be considered separately.

15/34 **Orchard network meeting**

In July, **MO** and **JH** orchestrated a meeting to bring together orchard groups that are already conserving local varieties. Approximately 15 local groups attended and the meeting raised awareness around orchard group activities, and presented opportunities for coordination. Many local orchard groups are conserving fruit independently, but often for different reasons (not PGR

conservation). The groups bring in significant amounts of lottery funding, and the general feeling on the fruit side of things is to coordinate that on a national scale.

FF asked whether characterization of traits was discussed at the meeting. **MO** reported that it had not been discussed, but the need to do this had been raised by several participants. **FF** commented that collections are maintained for heritage, but until they are characterized for breeding, they are only a theoretical resource.

MO suggested that the next step is characterization. At present, Peter Laws (<http://www.fruitid.com/#main>) is coordinating the genetic fingerprinting of 800-900 local variety samples, and this will give a good picture of what is unique from the NFC.

ACTION MO: circulate the notes of the meeting

MO The primary achievement was getting everyone in the same room to talk. For the future, there is a need to create a national project that they can all contribute to.

Virtual collections have started to be listed on NFC website, and local groups have responded well to that.

NM requested that **JH** and **MO** report to UKPGR group and let UKPGR group know if they can help somehow.

15/35

Brexit

During the meeting, we went around the table and members commented on the effects of Brexit on PGR. A summary of the comments are listed below:

1) Funding: There was overall concern about how Brexit will affect project funding, with particular concern regarding Horizon 2020. Horizon 2020 has been a major source of funding for many members of the group, and although the UK may still be eligible for this funding outside the EU, there was worry of bias against UK projects or projects containing UK staff over the next few years whilst UK exit from the EU is negotiated. How this will play out, will largely depend on the management of Brexit. For many members of the group, loss of EU funding will be significant, but not severe. EU funds are not critical for maintaining ex-situ collections.

2) Staff and loss of skills: Many of the organisations represented at the UKPGR meeting have staff (researchers and students) from EU countries, and uncertainty around whether they can stay was a cause of concern. For some organisations, up to 1/3 of their staff are not UK nationals, and there is concern that recruiting opportunities in the future will be limited. For Universities, there was concern that EU students will have to pay international fees in the future (£19710 compared to £4180), which is expected to have a negative effect on the number of students coming to the UK for PhD study. Currently, it is uncertain whether the UK Government will decide on whether EU students are considered overseas or not, or if Universities will be autonomous in this decision. A number of Universities have pledged to maintain current fee levels for existing EU students.

3) Collaboration: There were concerns that leaving the EU will make collaboration with EU countries more difficult. Some worried there will be bias against working with UK nationals and on UK projects. More specifically, there was concern surrounding whether the UK will still be considered a trusted testing centre for plant variety rights. ECPGR is not an EU initiative, and UK involvement with this initiative should not change.

4) Policy development: Concerns regarding to what extent the UK will be able to influence PGR development once we have exited the EU (with particular reference to potential for future EU PGR legislation). Current PGR obligations are international obligations, and the UK will still need to meet these.

5) PGR and PGR collections falling down the list of priorities: Most agreed that post-Brexit, PGR will no longer be as high on the UK/Defra's agenda, due to other issues taking precedence. It was agreed that the PGR community need to be proactive in raising the profile of the sector and

promotional activities need to be coordinated across the UK. Value for money & key deliverables need to be highlighted through promotional work.

6) Legislation: From a plant breeders perspective there was concern regarding plant variety rights. A significant amount of breeding is done outside the UK due to facilities found in other countries (e.g. fruit DUS testing is done in the Netherlands). As a large part of income comes from breeding, the uncertainty around how plant breeders rights and plant passporting will work in the UK were a serious concern. Protected site designations may also change as a result of EU exit, although most EU site designations are underpinned by domestic legislation.

7) Opportunities: As well as concerns, there was overall agreement that Brexit may pose one or two opportunities. Some saw this as an opportunity to push the importance of PGR and take stock of the genetic varieties that are found in the UK and their value (natural capital). Opportunities were also seen for increased collaboration within the UK, and also to look globally, rather than focus on EU countries.

ACTION DEFRA: update UKPGR on our discussions with AHDB

ACTION ALL: comment on ToR of the group following circulation by NM

ACTION DEFRA/NM: circulate summary of Brexit discussion to NM to review and add actions

15/36 Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol (KB)

KB gave an introduction about EU sector specific guidance. UK government has some general concerns on current draft plant breeding guidance, particularly linkage with other international instruments. Next draft will be circulated for further views.

Nagoya – Brexit work will start early next year.

Stakeholder meetings on Nagoya protocol and CBD will happen on November 1st. Next COP will be about how to replace current plan that runs out in 2020. Keen to build on target 13 and how to get genetic resources in there.

NM asked about WCMC analysis and how to take forward indicators in the UK.

ACTION DEFRA: Find out about the indicators being used by CBD parties and WCMC indicator work

ACTION DEFRA: Circulate Katie Beckett presentation from July

JIC and Regulatory Delivery are jointly organizing a workshop on Nagoya implementation on 22/11/16. **SM**, **FF** and **CA** expressed an interest in attending.

15/37 Easy SMTA discussion (MO/MA)

MO wanted clarity on SMTA handlings across the UK. In particular, it would be useful to know what systems others use and how, and whether they report to the third party beneficiary (tpb..

MA have not sent anything to tpb to date, but want to do it by the end of the year. Shrink-wrap is JIC default. **SM** recommended using the shrink-wrap approach. **MO** reported of concerns about shrink-wrap not being well suited to the NFC, as is difficult to work within a preordering system when supplying active material. **CA** is currently assigned to a paper based system system, but it is not what most users want or use, and will therefore move to the shrink-wrap system soon. **MA** feels obligation is still rather unclear on how and what to report back to the beneficiary. For example, commercial users will not want their usage to be made public.

ACTION MA: set up email group to discuss further. MA initially email all of the UKPGR group to invite members to join the email discussion.

15/38 PGR applications/project news (NM)

MA: In the process of renewing BBSRC funding. GRU is involved in two H2020 projects (and leading on one of these).

AT: Secured money from BBSRC for genetic analysis of wheat alien lines.

FF: Got funding from ECPGR to characterize germplasms from across Europe. DNA extractions to be made in the next week on cherry species.

LC: Continuing work on vegetable cultivar description database

JA: Got to first level of approval for a permanent member of staff for RHS big flora project. Started inventory of woody genera growing outdoors in GB (approximately 1000 genera).

JH: Work with Matt on top fruit.

AD: Funding (USDA & industry) for the cocoa quarantine centre has just been renewed.

MO: Submitted proposal to BBSRC for phytochemical screening project. Involved with potential project with Kew on lupins. Also had small involvement with a local orchard group in Suffolk looking at surveying orchards looking for local varieties.

CC: CWR project is in the core collecting phase. Signed 23rd country (Costa Rica). Banana seed biology project just started. Funding for CWR projects ends in 2018, looking to see where to go beyond there.

SM: Existing grants come to an end in January 2018. Advised to go into BBSRC.

CA: Was involved in a proposal that is under consideration from BBSRC looking at brassica. Have a new member of staff at genebank from next week who will help with management and research. Also working on a collaboration with colleagues at Kew looking at wild carrot.

NM: Just had meeting in Lithuania. Very positive meeting and a key recommendation is collaborating better with other groups. Redlisting CWR. In terms of project applications to the EU: farmers pride (horizon 2020 application). Networking and farm conservation of CWR. Plan to put in a Marie Curie application, but still developing the project for this. Application for GCRF: training initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa. Also submitted a Darwin initiative application to do CWR work in Bhutan.

15/39 **Update on European funding opportunities (CB)**

The 2017 work programme was published on 5th July. First deadline is 14th of February. Alongside this, the Commission is looking towards final stages of the 2020 programme with an aim to adopt a strategic programme in November. Scoping paper for 2018-2020 will focus on 5 areas. These include: climate change resilience, circular economy, production systems, healthy ecosystems, food systems, innovation on land and sea, and connecting up rural coastal areas.

In terms of Brexit, following the referendum, it is still 'business as usual'. UK researchers can continue to apply for 2020 funding. The Commission updated their guidance to confirm projects with UK staff will NOT be discriminated against. Treasury announcement on 13/08 around uncertainty of EU funding post Brexit: The Treasury was given assurances that funding will continue post Brexit. BEIS still have lead on H2020 and set up mailbox to monitor cases where researches face difficulties (research@beis.gov.uk).

ACTION CB: guidance confirming that UK will not be discriminated against to be circulated (if it is publically available)

15/40 **Awareness raising / opportunities (NM)**

NM commented on the need to increase awareness of the group.

MA reported that the first step is to share information on engagement activity coming up in the next year. Each group member has their own initiatives, but we need a better sense of what the group is and what we want to do. Suggested that the group could utilize the website more for public engagement.

JH: need to talk to parliamentary groups and explain why PGR are important. Need to have something on the shelf ready in case someone shows interest.

ACTION MA: lead on this work for the next 12 months

15/41 **AOB (NM)**

NM: the group agreed that they would like to update the UKNPI this autumn.

NM questioned whether group members would want to send duplicate material to the Global seed vault in Svalbard. Currently there are no UK collections there. **NMun** noted that Garden Organic is thinking of sending material there. **SC** commented that from a Defra perspective, ensuring that material has a secure black-box arrangement is the priority, and Defra are not specifically promoting Svalbard.

ACTION NM: share Svalbard presentation (SC circulate to the group)

NM: point of information. Bryan Ford Lloyd beet collection is moving from Birmingham and going to Warwick. For beetroot, contact CA from now on.

15/42 **Date of next meeting (NM)**

March 15th 2017

15/43

Presentations from Natural England on Lizard Peninsula CWR work (contact JC for slides) and NM on recent CWR work