

UK Plant Genetic Resources Group Meeting

UKPGR Autumn Technical Meeting

DATE & TIME: Tuesday 12th October 2021, 14:00 – 17:00

LOCATION: Springfield Country Hotel, Dorset

Nigel Maxted, Univ. of Birmingham (NM – Chair)
Charlotte Allender, Uni. of Warwick (CA)
Lin Huang, Aberystwyth University (LH)
Shelagh Kell, Univ. of Birmingham (SK)
Chris Byrne, Scottish Government (CB)
Mags Cousins, Natural England (MC)
Felicidad Fernandez, NIAB EMR (FF)
Catrina Fenton, Garden Organic (CF)
Chris Griffiths, Natural England (CG)
Kalani Seymour, Plant Heritage (KS)
Sarah Trinder, Univ. of Warwick (ST)
Matt Ordidge, Univ. of Reading (MO)
Sean May, Univ. of Nottingham (SM)

Julian Hosking (JH)
John Dickie, Kew (JD)
Noam Chayut, JIC (NC)
Elizabeth Scott, NIAB (ES)
Caroline Liddell, Defra (CL)
Lydia Smith, NIAB EMR (LS)
Solomy Nantege, Defra (SN)
Lesley McCarthy, SASA (LM)
Amelia Greenham, Defra (AG)
Tez Otter, Natural England (TO)
Vicki Cooke, Plant Heritage (VC)
Ben Le Bas, Natural England (BL)

21/10 Apologies (NM)

Joanne Russell – James Hutton Institute, Glenn Bryan – James Hutton Institute, Peter Hoebe – SCRUC, Vicki Cooke – Plant Heritage, Frances Gawthrop – Tozer Seeds, James Williams – JNCC

The meeting was chaired by Nigel Maxted (NM).

21/11 Minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2021 (NM)

LH asked for item 21/07 under LH to be revised to ‘Imports from UKRI – £5.4 million funding including trees and Perennial rye-grass’ for the carbon storing project.

21/12 Matters arising (NM)

LS – online workshops will be held on 15th, 16th, & 18th November covering forage, cereal and fruit and vegetable crops respectively with a second date for cereal yet to be confirmed for the Defra-funded project looking at under-utilised crops.

Action: LS to circulate more information on the four workshops.

21/13 European Genetic Resources Strategy (SK)

SK presented the European Genetic Resources Strategy developed in the context of the EU-funded GenRes Bridge project, coordinated by the European Forest Institute, in which the University of Birmingham is a partner (see <http://www.genresbridge.eu/>). The Strategy addresses a gap in the current policy landscape in Europe regarding genetic resources conservation and sustainable use, and includes 29 recommendations for action to improve plant, animal and forest genetic resources conservation and sustainable use throughout the region. The European Genetic Resources Strategy is supported by the European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR), European Regional Focal Point for Animal Genetic Resources (ERFP), and European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN), who are also developing domain-specific strategies for plant, animal, and forest genetic resources, respectively.

The four strategies will be launched in Brussels on 29 November. Following the launch, the GenRes Bridge project partners anticipate that the strategies will be

promoted by National Coordinators with the aim of eventual adoption and implementation with the support of the EC.

21/14

Implementation of the recent Agriculture and Environment Bills (CL)

The policy team is working with the Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) team to see if genetic resources can fit into any of the schemes, they are developing under the Agriculture Act as well as the Future Farming & Countryside Programme (FFCP) team to consider schemes outside of ELMs. CL met with NM, JH, NC, and LS in May 2021 to discuss other potential schemes not covered by ELMs or FFCP.

Work on the genetic resources chapter in the Nature Strategy 2030 will be picked up in Spring 2022 due to publication being pushed to Spring 2023.

21/15

Phytosanitary requirements post-Brexit (All)

There are concerns around the new requirement for phytosanitary certificates for material exported to the EU which has led to additional expenses, work, and time. The group shared different ways around this i.e.

- CA – testing of all crops in the collection by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and certificates will be provided for seeds from those tested crops instead of testing each seed sample.
- SM – moved away from the above method to periodic checks of a proportion of material at the University of Nottingham.
- MO – National Fruit Collections completed all EU orders before the end of the transition period in December 2020 and has since paused all EU orders until there is a clearer procedure in place.
- LH – combines consignments that need testing before exportation to cut down costs. Also, pre-notification on the PEACH system and phytosanitary certificates will be required for imports of some plants and plant products into the UK from 1st January 2022. More information can be found [here](#).
- NC – trialing annual bulk testing of the full collection to cut costs.

Actions:

- Affected group members to discuss and identify the issues from these new requirements.
- The secretariat to organize a meeting between these members and the relevant Defra team to address their concerns.

21/16

European network for in situ conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources (NM)

NM & SK led on the development of tools and standards for the management of in situ PGR conservation data and are available to all stakeholder at this link [D2.2 In situ conservation information management tools.pdf \(bham.ac.uk\)](#).

They are also developing a European network for in situ conservation of crop wild relatives (CWR) and landraces with several PGR institutes and organizations already expressing interest in joining the network. More information can be found at this link [European network – Farmer's Pride \(bham.ac.uk\)](#). NM is pushing for a combined network of CWR and landraces, but the ECPGR is keen on separate networks.

2/17

In situ conservation of CWR (BL)

There are currently 225 National Nature Reserves (NNRs) owned or managed by Natural England, other approved organizations, or private stakeholders for nature conservation. Research into the richness of CWR conservation on NNRs by Hannah

Fielder, NM and JH found that Purbeck has the highest CWRs and 112 CWR taxa on the top eleven Nature England NNRs. She also found that the Lizard in Cornwall had more genetic diversity of CWR than other NNRs.

NM emphasized the UKPGR Group's aim for official recognition and management of the top ten CWR sites it has identified to ensure conservation. BL acknowledged the importance of CWRs and the group's request but asked for more evidence to support Hannah's Ecogeographic diversity assessment findings to persuade Nature England.

21/18

A guide to CWR for managers of Protected Areas (CG)

CG, NM, BL, and JH have produced a guide to help managers of protected areas and interested individuals identify priority CWR species in the UK and highlight the importance of their conservation. The guide will be published on the ECPGR website and updated regularly.

21/19

AOB

Action: NM to circulate the recently published 10-year CG gene bank strategy.

Citizen Science research – CF

On Friday 1st October Garden Organic ran a workshop, the focus of which was to identify key research areas and potential partners for collaborative citizen science research in small scale and urban growing that address one or a combination of the themes of climate change, biodiversity loss and food security. The event was attended by representatives from several academic research institutions and a report from the day including recommended next steps will follow. Garden Organic is looking to develop a network of collaborative community science projects in sustainable small scale and urban horticulture and would welcome participation from other institutions and organisations. Please contact Dr Bruce Pearce for more information BPearce@gardenorganic.org.uk.

21/20

Date of next meeting (NM) – Thursday 24th March 2022