

UK COMMITTEE FOR IUCN-UK EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 50th meeting held on 20th June 2007

Via Teleconference

1000-1200hrs

Present: Andy Brown (Chair), Eric Blencowe, Mark Huxham, Chris Mahon, Mike Pienkowski, Joanna Robertson, John Angell (for Item 13).

In attendance: Vin Fleming, John Henson Webb (Secretariat).

1. Chair's welcome

AB welcomed participants to the teleconference, noting that this was Chris Mahon's first ExCo.

2. Apologies

Formal apologies were received from Alistair Gammell and Martin Spray.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of ExCo 49 were adopted with minor amendments received from MP.

Action 50.3.1 Secretariat to put amended ExCo 49 minutes on IUCN-UK website

4. Discussion on business topics

Countdown 2010 UK Parliamentary seminar

It was noted that both Mark Wright (WWF-UK) and Susan Alcorn (Natural England) had offered assistance with the seminar, but required a clear indication of its timing, content and objectives. MH also proposed that the British Ecological Society be approached with regard to participation in the event.

The seminar is now scheduled for Autumn 2007, and could be used to introduce the new UK Environment Minister to the Countdown 2010 initiative, perhaps taking the new UK BAP as a lead-in issue – the document is to be published sometime between July and September. With the devolved administrations and UK country agencies signing on as C2010 partners, the inclusion of local and regional government under the UK BAP was raised as a general objective for consideration.

Action 50.4.1 JR to draft C2010 seminar 'objective' paper and pass to Secretariat for circulation to ExCo for comment and inclusion of progress with individual contacts

Action 50.4.2 MH to approach BES with regard to participation in the Parliamentary Seminar

Action 50.4.3 AB to approach Barbara Young with regard to raising Parliamentary interest

HLF funding

The Secretariat reported a response from Nick Folkard (RSPB) that there was no legal reason why UK Overseas Territories could not bid for Heritage and Lottery Funding (HLF). However, HLF policy is that, because funds are generated in the UK (via sales of lottery tickets), grants must go to projects within the UK. This situation also holds for the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF), where projects receiving NHMF funds must be accessible to the UK public (meaning Great Britain and Northern Ireland). Nick did not feel that lobbying by any organisation would alter either position. MP noted that the UKOTCF, along with several OT Government representatives, were writing to the HLF with regard to the latter's misunderstanding that OTs were foreign countries and not part of the UK. It was subsequently noted that Doug Houllier (Ex-W&WT Director) was now a trustee of the HLF board, providing a possible means for engagement by the UK Committee as a possible contact for MP.

5. UK Overseas Territories

MP reported that the House of Commons Environmental Audit Select Committee (EAC) had published its report on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) on May 23rd (see key recommendations in the appended extract – Appendix 1), with the UKOTCF among the organisations that had given evidence to the Committee. In a Supplementary Memorandum submitted by the (FCO), the Minister noted that the UKOTCF was in the process of gathering information on the progress in implementing the Environment Charter Commitments for each Territory (or the equivalent for those Territories without Charters). This information would help inform a planned joint review by JNCC, DFID, Defra and FCO, hopefully to be completed by Christmas 2007, which may help assign departmental responsibility for OT activity.

Action 50.5.1 Secretariat to circulate RSPB OTs spending report to ExCo

It was suggested that non-sensitive interim information from the review could feed into the proposed Parliamentary Seminar.

Action 50.5.2 Secretariat to contact Wyn Jones (JNCC) regarding OTs strand of Parliamentary Seminar

6. Who Pays? Project

The Secretariat noted that Paul Morling (RSPB) was in the process of producing a final draft of the Report, hopefully by the End of June. He would then be seeking assistance in editing the full Report as well as producing an Executive Summary.

It was agreed that the earmarked £5K would be made available for the production of the full Report (simple, ring-bound publication), and the Executive Summary (a glossy pamphlet in the style of the Wealth From the Wild publication). If ready, the Report may be launched at the Countdown 2010 Parliamentary Seminar.

Action 50.6.1 Secretariat to circulate final draft of Who Pays? Report to ExCo when received from Paul Morling

Action 50.6.2 ExCo to send comments/amendments of Who Pays? Report to Secretariat for consideration during editing

Action 50.6.1 Secretariat to assist Paul Morling with editing of Who Pays? Report and to draft Executive Summary

7. September Members' meeting

ExCo reviewed the draft agenda for the September Members' meeting, noting the potential speakers already contacted:

- Mike Jordan (Chester Zoo) – overview and interpretation of the IUCN Re-introduction Guidelines;
- David Sheppard (Natural England) – invertebrate case study (field cricket) including *in-situ/ex-situ* conservation;
- Mary Gibby (Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh) – oblong woodsia project and genetic management;
Martin Gaywood (Scottish Natural Heritage) – public perceptions and attitudes toward re-introduction projects;
- Roy Dennis (Highland Wildlife Foundation) – a forward vision for re-introductions.

In discussion it was suggested that the public perception presentation should address a range of taxa and invasive species (including links to trade sources) if possible. Further, it was suggested that an appropriate case study presentation by an NGO could be included on the agenda. CM offered to approach the Wildlife Trusts regarding a possible presentation on a ten-year dormouse project. It was agreed that the day would have two discussion periods, one before the lunch-break, the second after the final presentation.

Action 50.7.1 Secretariat to produce final Members' meeting agenda by July 13th

Action 50.7.2 CM to contact Wildlife Trusts regarding NGO presentation for September meeting and then contact Secretariat

Action 50.7.3 ExCo to provide Secretariat with suggestions for title for September meeting

8. Biodiversity Indicators – report on current JNCC work

The Secretariat noted the content of Paper 50.2 – an excerpt from the minutes of the 9th meeting of the JNCC Science Group on May 3rd. Disappointment was voiced that the situation regarding determining suitable targets and headline indicators seemed unresolved. However, the Defra publication "Biodiversity indicators in your pocket 2007" (available via the JNCC website <http://www.jncc.gov.uk/>) was noted as an overview of the current situation. It was also mentioned that, though a formal agenda had not yet been prepared, a report on biodiversity indicators by the Secretariat for the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS) will be submitted to the Environment Ministers' Conference, in Belgrade in October 2007.

The Secretariat were asked to approach Paul Rose for further clarification of the JNCC work being undertaken on indicators.

Action 50.8.1 JR to circulate details of Biodiversity indicators in your pocket 2007 publication

Action 50.8.2 Secretariat to contact Paul Rose requesting clarification on 'state-of-play' regarding biodiversity indicators then circulate received information to ExCo

9. Feedback on the Countdown 2010 Partnership Assembly

JR and JHW reported that this was a useful and stimulating meeting. It provided an opportunity to network with people involved with the Countdown 2010 initiative from across Europe and see what efforts are being made to raise its profile. The Countdown 2010 Secretariat will be providing a report on the days activities. In its role as UK Focal Point for C2010, the UK Secretariat is undertaking to encourage more UK organisations to enrol on the initiative, beginning with UK subscribers. It was also agreed to provide Countdown 2010 promotional material at the September Members' meeting.

Action 50.9.1 Secretariat to prepare Countdown 2010 webpage then contact UK subscribing organisations regarding enrolment on the initiative

Action 50.9.2 Secretariat to contact Jim Thompson (IEEM) regarding promoting enrolment of Institute members with Countdown 2010

Action 50.9.3 Secretariat to circulate Countdown 2010 Partners Assembly report to ExCo when received

10. Vacancy for second Co-optee

The Secretariat had approached Sue Christie, who proposed two candidates and noted that the Environment and Heritage Service Northern Ireland might provide a number of suitable persons. Bob Brown, Chair of the Northern Ireland Biodiversity Group and as a member of the Joint Committee of the JNCC, was considered a potential candidate.

Action 50.10.1 Secretariat to contact candidates to see if interested in Co-option

11. Actions and matters arising

Finance update

The Secretariat provided two papers (50.4 and 50.5) reporting on the Committee finances for the end of 2006-07 and the current financial year respectively. It was noted that £430 of subscription fees had been received so far.

Actions

AB noted that he had emailed the office of Julia Marton-Lefèvre in regard to an invitation to meet with the UK Committee, either in late 2007 or 2008.

Action 50.11.1 ExCo to email Secretariat in regard to completed actions from Paper 50.3

12. Secretariat report – verbal update

VF and JHW gave a brief verbal report on recent Secretariat activity.

13.AoB

Greening the IUCN Barcelona Congress

It was agreed that IUCN should develop a methodology to embrace mechanisms, such as virtual conferencing, and thereby set a standard for reducing the environmental footprint of meetings held by large MEAs. It was further suggested that the scale of the Congress be reviewed, questioning whether an attendance of eight thousand persons was necessary. However, positive aspects of the Congress should be stressed, such as the four-year cycle.

Action 50.13.1 Secretariat to contact IUCN Congress Advisory Committee regarding travel guidance for Congress attendees

Action 50.13.2 Secretariat to draft short letter for AB to send to IUCN Congress Advisory Committee in support of Adrian Phillips' proposal

JR reported on the European Programme consultation meeting held in Brussels on 12th and 13th June. She noted that five thematic priority areas had been agreed and the consultation period was to run from July 16th until September 21st.

Action 50.13.3 JR to provide Secretariat with European Programme note for inclusion on the UK Committee website

Action 50.13.4 Secretariat to email UK Committee members when European Programme consultation document is made available

JR reported that the UK BAP chapeau was out for consultation, the draft document having been before the BAP Standing Committee in April. She recommended that the UK Committee involve itself in the process, to ensure that the document is relevant and comprehensive in light of devolution in the UK.

Action 50.13.5 JR to circulate briefing note on UK BAP consultation to ExCo

John Angell (Defra) reported that the May meeting of the Working Group of Senior Officials (WGSO) had drafted an agenda for the Environment Ministers' meeting, being held in Belgrade in October, with input to the biodiversity session from the IUCN through the agency of the Regional Office for Europe (ROfE). There was seen to be a possible lobbying role for IUCN.

EB noted that he was moving to a new position within Defra and that the IUCN liaison position would be vacant temporarily. The Secretariat were asked to send relevant information to Jean Smyth until the situation is resolved, possibly in August or September. On behalf of the UK Committee, AB recorded thanks and appreciation for EB's contribution to ExCo during his association with the UK Committee.

AB indicated that, due to pressure of work, he would like to stand down as Chair of the UK Committee at either the next Members' meeting or subsequent AGM, whichever was the more convenient. The Secretariat were asked to lead discussion on the necessary arrangements.

Action 50.13.6 Secretariat to contact ExCo regarding arrangements for selecting new UK Committee Chair

14. Date of future meetings

The date for ExCo 51 and the Members' meeting is September 19th.

Annex 1

Extracts from: EAC Report on Trade, Development and Environment: the role of the FCO

23rd May 2007

Select Committee on Environmental Audit [Fifth Report](#)

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The environment plays a complex and important role in conflict and its resolution. Sustainable development, climate change mitigation and environmental protection should therefore be considered security issues of critical importance to the UK Government and FCO. The UK must be a proponent of a strong, coordinated, multilateral environmental system able to avoid situations in which environmental degradation might lead to instability or conflict. International action on environmental challenges might also prove to be an important tool for fostering closer international relations. (Paragraph 14)
2. The Committee welcomes the Foreign Secretary's robust statement in the Sustainable Development Action Plan regarding the importance of sustainable development to international peace and prosperity. The significance the Foreign Secretary places on respecting environmental limits, on addressing climate change, and on the need to deal with the links between trade, poverty and the environment, satisfies the Committee that these issues are being taken seriously by the FCO. However, as the Foreign Secretary states, "the challenge we face is a big one". Words must therefore be backed up by an FCO institutionally equal to the challenge, in terms of skills and resources, to enable real progress to be made. (Paragraph 17)

FCO Policy

3. We agree with the Government that it is right for the FCO to have a focus on both climate change and environmental governance issues. The work that the FCO is conducting to ensure the better management of fisheries and forests is particularly important. Nevertheless, although this particular focus might enable the FCO to make efficiency savings, it risks the neglect of other, also critical, environmental issues. Given that the UK's ability to contribute successfully in meeting a number of international environmental challenges will largely be down to the skill and assiduousness of the FCO, the lack of a wider commitment to the environment risks the UK being ineffective in its response. It is essential that the FCO widen its focus to encompass those international environmental challenges where strong diplomacy will be part of the solution, such as biodiversity loss. (Paragraph 26)
4. Evidence from JNCC and IFAW suggests that the FCO has a declining role in international negotiations on biodiversity, which could have a damaging impact on our influence in such fora. We recommend that the FCO initiate an urgent review, with DEFRA and JNCC, to assess whether delegations are being provided with the level of diplomatic support that they require to achieve the UK's aims. (Paragraph 29)
5. Given the importance of improved staff knowledge of sustainable development in meeting sustainable development objectives, it is essential to ensure that training results in real knowledge improvements. If, as the Minister told the Sub-committee, the success of such training is now measured through a sophisticated internal assessment process, it is surprising that the FCO has not sought to trumpet this achievement through the Sustainable Development Action Plan. The next Action Plan should explain fully this process as well as provide targets to enable progress in this area to be charted. (Paragraph 34)
6. The Sustainable Development Action Plan appears to have failed to address the SDC recommendation to "continue to explore the opportunities for joint working with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in relation to natural resource protection and conflict and reflect these in future [Action Plans]". Opportunities for closer working between the two departments on the environment-conflict interface should include, jointly with DFID, an assessment of the role environmental protection and management, and sustainable development, can play in limiting the environmental conditions that can exacerbate conflict and how this could feed into Global Conflict Prevention Pool work. It should also consider the role that environmental protection and restoration can play in reconstruction efforts. The next Action Plan must detail how the FCO will take forward this work. (Paragraph 38)
7. The 2006 White Paper strategic priorities were identified by the Government, as a whole, as the most pressing international issues that it must address. We thus welcome greatly the Foreign Secretary's inclusion of climate security as a new UK international priority, and the acknowledgement therefore of the critical importance of this issue. We commend also the Foreign Secretary for

demonstrating the UK's commitment to this issue through her robust argument for the consideration of climate change at the UN Security Council. Despite this we believe that wider environmental issues should be better reflected in the UK's international priorities, particularly given the growing evidence of the threats associated with continued environmental degradation. A new international priority placing a greater emphasis on the need to ensure environmental protection must be added, to stress the key strategic importance of this issue for the whole of Government. This should complement a new international environmental strategy to focus Government-wide action. (Paragraph 42)

FCO capacity on the environment

8. We feel that the better integration in the FCO of sustainable development with business, and climate change with energy policy, is positive and could lead to the development of policies that better account for sustainable development issues. However, we are concerned that, as a result of restructuring, the FCO has lost its environmental nexus, and has decided to lower the resources given over to a number of international environmental issues. We recommend that an environmental policy group is re-established to drive forward an environmental agenda in the FCO, as well as to provide the central environmental expertise that existed prior to the restructuring. We are particularly concerned that failure to do this will impact on the UK's ability to influence environmental negotiations in international fora. (Paragraph 46)

9. We welcome the FCO's training programme to ensure better that all staff become conversant in sustainable development and environmental issues. Nevertheless, we have heard during the course of this inquiry that the specialist skills that the FCO requires in the field of environmental diplomacy are lacking. We are of the opinion that these skills can only in part be addressed by FCO staff and by other Government departments through secondments. Given the complex and specialised nature of this work, and the FCO's own admission that its internal corps of civil servants working in this area are not able to develop their expertise quickly enough, we call for a large increase in the use of externally-appointed environmental specialists. In addition, to ensure that the unique abilities that FCO officials develop can be aligned with environmental expertise, it is essential that career diplomats with an environmental focus are developed; an environmental 'career anchor' must therefore be re-established. Our earlier recommendation that an environmental policy group be established could provide the location for this 'anchor'. The appointment of John Ashton as Special Representative on Climate Change, and the FCO's assertions as to the importance of this appointment for driving the climate change agenda forward, could be taken as an implicit recognition that the current structure is inadequate to the task of international diplomacy on environmental issues. (Paragraph 52)

A new international environmental strategy

10. Failures in the Government-wide Sustainable Development Strategy, *Securing the Future*, might explain the lack of consideration given to a number of international environmental issues in FCO sustainable development documents, which are based upon it. However, although it has its shortcomings, we were surprised to notice that the 2006 White Paper, *Active Diplomacy for a Changing World*, also a Government-wide strategy, does not refer to or explain its links with *Securing the Future*. This is a considerable oversight, and demonstrates the continuing lack of coordination on sustainable development issues across Government. (Paragraph 58)

11. *Securing the Future* highlighted the fragmented state of natural resource protection policy, and the negative impact that this has on the UK's ability to meet environmental challenges. DEFRA has stated that it will seek to address this through the development of a coherent approach to the natural environment, which will also take into account the UK's international impact. However, we are concerned that the international dimension will not receive the focus it requires in this domestic strategy, and might fail to incorporate issues including security, foreign policy, trade and development. Therefore, a new international environmental strategy must be developed, owned and delivered by a number of departments, including FCO, DEFRA, DFID and DTI. (Paragraph 59)

Setting an example

12. We commend the support given by FCO staff to conservation and environmental projects and NGOs internationally, both financially and diplomatically, where such cooperation is in line with our international environmental objectives. Such support also sends a strong message to host countries that these issues are a priority for the UK Government. (Paragraph 60)

13. We welcome the Minister's strong statement on the need to work closely with NGOs in order better to make progress on mutual objectives, and to engage with NGOs at an earlier stage in the policy formation process. Nevertheless, on the basis of the evidence that we have received, a disconnect between the FCO and environmental NGOs still remains. We anticipate that the strategy

for engagement with NGOs currently being developed will go some way to address this, but we are not convinced that without a re-evaluation of overall FCO priorities to have a more explicit environmental focus the necessary changes will occur to ensure that this happens at all levels. Through such a re-evaluation, and the changes that we recommend in this report regarding, inter alia, the provision of specialist environmental expertise from outside the FCO and the development of FCO civil servants with a career focus on the environment, we believe that longer term, more beneficial, relationships will develop between the FCO and environmental NGOs. (Paragraph 65)

14. We applaud the FCO's demonstrated commitment to improving environmental management across its overseas estate. The promotion of sustainable practices through their application in the overseas estate is also essential in building support for, and exhibiting, the UK's commitment to best practice in sustainable development. (Paragraph 67)

15. The voluntary nature of carbon offsets from overseas posts' flights is an anomaly that needs removing. It runs contrary to domestic Government policy and leaves the UK Government open to criticism that it is failing to address the climate change impact of its own operations. The implications of this irregularity are particularly serious, and incongruous, given the FCO's diplomatic role in negotiating international agreements on climate change. (Paragraph 69)

16. The UK must succeed domestically on the same issues that we wish to succeed internationally, to provide the political leadership required to encourage more sustainable action by other countries. This includes meeting our international commitments in areas such as the prevention of biodiversity loss and domestic commitments on greenhouse gas emissions. Although the UK will meet its international commitments under Kyoto, we argue that this only represents a step in the right direction and does not necessarily reflect the scale of effort required to meet the challenge of climate change. We are therefore concerned that the UK might fail to reach its more demanding domestic target, and that this failure also will result in the loss of the political leadership demonstrated by the UK through the adoption of the target. (Paragraph 72)

UK Overseas Territories

17. We welcome the fact that FCO and DFID have, in the short term, increased their financial support for better environmental management in the UKOTs, but we are concerned that this has not been undertaken on the basis of an analysis of need. Research by the RSPB suggests that even with this funding increase a considerable funding shortfall will remain in the UKOTs for biodiversity protection. (Paragraph 78)

18. We are disturbed that witnesses have stressed to us that departments other than FCO and DFID do not provide the level of support to the UKOTs that is required. Although DEFRA does provide some direct and indirect support, the level of this does not fill the specialist environmental gaps that are apparent in the UKOTs. We recommend firstly that DEFRA be involved at the highest level in reviewing the Environment Charters. The Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Biodiversity should provide the focus for this review to ensure coordination between departments. It is necessary for this review to assess whether both the Government, and the governments of the UKOTs, have met their respective obligations under the Environment Charters and Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Secondly, DEFRA should be given joint responsibility towards the UKOTs. This should be reflected in an updated UK International Priority, to include environmental protection alongside security and good governance in the UKOTs. This will also have to be reflected in DEFRA's Comprehensive Spending Review settlement. Finally, as part of the Environment Charter review, the case for larger and more routine funding must be explored. Given that the Treasury is currently conducting a spending review, it is imperative that this funding analysis feeds into, and influences, the Treasury's ultimate decision as to spending allocations for FCO, DFID and DEFRA. (Paragraph 83)

19. If the Government fails to address these issues it will run the risk of continued environmental decline and species extinctions in the UKOTs, ultimately causing the UK to fail in meeting its domestic and international environmental commitments. Failure to meet such commitments undermines the UK's ability to influence the international community to take the strong action required for reversing environmental degradation in their own countries, and globally. (Paragraph 84)

Select Committee on Environmental Audit [Minutes of Evidence](#)

Supplementary Memorandum submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I am writing to you and your Committee with additional information for your inquiry into the role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Trade, Development and Environment.

OVERSEAS TERRITORIES ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Your Committee expressed an interest for further information on the Overseas Territories Environment Programme. I enclose a list of the projects that have received funding from the Overseas Territories Environment Programme since its inception in 2004. The information is also available on the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum (UKOTCF) website (www.ukotcf.org). The projects approved for 2007 to 2008 will appear on the Forum website soon.

Your Committee also asked about an assessment of the Overseas Territories Environment Charters. The UKOTCF is currently gathering information on the progress in implementing the Environment Charter Commitments for each Territory (or the equivalent for those Territories without Charters). The Forum intends to publish a progress report towards the middle of this year. The FCO will use that information, in consultation with Whitehall colleagues and the governments of the Overseas Territories, to carry out a review of the Environment Charters which have now been in place for five years.