

## **ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FUNDERS' FORUM**

### **UK- Environmental Observation Framework**

**Draft Minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> Management Group Meeting**  
**10.00 - 3.00pm 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009**  
**Room 301- Defra - Ergon House**  
**London SW1P 2AL**

#### **Attendees**

Ian Davidson	Defra (Chair)
Clifford Henry	DOE NI
Michael Schultz	NERC
Tom Leatherland	SEPA (telephone)
Keith Porter	Natural England
Helen Sellars	Forestry Commission (telephone)
Richard Evans	WAG
Robert Lowson	EEA / GMES / SEIS
Cathy Johnson	DECC
Adrian Barraclough	EA
Mary Barkham	Head ERFF (telephone)
Beth Greenaway	UK-EOF Programme Manager
Gemma Truelove	UK-EOF (Notes)
Andrea Leedale	ERFF/ UK-EOF SoN
Amber Vater	UK-EOF

#### **Apologies**

Peter Costigan	Defra
Richard Walmsley	EA
Paul Mason	GECC Obs. group chair
Lawrence Way	JNCC (sent written comments)
Shaun Russell	WERH
Ron Stagg	SG
Andy Shaw	NCEO Strategy/ BNSC
Bruce Truscott	Met Office

#### **Minutes**

##### **1. Welcome and introductions**

- 1.1 The chair welcomed attendees to the 7<sup>th</sup> UK-EOF Management Group meeting. Apologies were made and there was a tour de table. There were 2 new members of the Management Group present - Adrian Broad from the Environment Agency (replacing Doug Wilson) and Robert Lowson from the EEA.
- 1.2 The purpose of the meeting was to:
- Finalise and agree the 'Progress and Future Challenges' Report
  - Discuss the Draft Decision Making Framework.
  - Agree on the messages and actions for the ERFF main board meeting.

##### **2. Update and progress**

###### **Paper A: Minutes of the last meeting**

- 2.1 Outstanding actions from the last Management Group were carried over to this meeting. There had been no comments on the draft minutes which were agreed as correct.

- 2.2 Action 25 had asked for comments on the Data Initiative proposal. None had been received and so the secretariat would go ahead as detailed. The Data Initiative will be agenda item for discussion at the January 2010 Management Group meeting where firm plans will be presented. Therefore any comments on or suggested changes to the proposal as it stands (in the 6<sup>th</sup> Management Group papers) should be forwarded to the secretariat by 23<sup>rd</sup> October

**Action 1: MG members to forward any comments on the Data Initiative proposal by 23<sup>rd</sup> October.**

#### **Paper E: UK-EOF Funders Priorities**

- 2.3 There was an outstanding action from the last meeting (25) for funders to fill-in their organisation's top priority for the UK-EOF. Only 6 organisations had done so and the remaining were asked to complete this by 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009. This information would be used in the short-term to steer the presentation to the ERFF Main Board at the meeting in November and in the longer term to prioritise and direct the work programme of the UK-EOF for 2010.

**Action 2: CCW, DECC, Defra, EA, JNCC, SEPA, SG, SNH and WAG to submit a statement describing the most important thing that their organisation would like to see achieved by the UK-EOF by 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009.**

#### **Progress Update**

- 2.4 Since the last meeting the secretariat had made considerable progress:
- A Decision making framework meeting was held and draft document produced;
  - Statement of Need workshop report released;
  - GEOSS action plan drafted;
  - Catalogue contracts let for the development of an information model and the next steps for the technical development;
  - UKLP Interoperability Board meeting attended;
  - Catalogue demo at Defra/LWEC/ERFF meeting and ERFF Review workshop;
  - Progress and Future Challenges document drafted.
- 2.5 The secretariat had been considering the completeness of the evidence that had been collected so far to support the process of the UK-EOF and the resulting confidence (2009 compared to 2006) of achieving the UK-EOF aims in 2013. Beth Greenaway described this thinking to Management Group.
- 2.6 The group agreed that this was (with a couple of amendments) a useful and positive message to give the ERFF Main Board about the progress made. They discussed whether 100% completeness was the target for all the evidence categories and agreed that this should be discussed later.
- 2.7 The private sector was identified as a major element of what was currently missing from the picture of costs including e.g. waste, aggregates, energy, industry and local authority information. This information may take the form of one-off surveys rather than long-term observations but could still be a huge and potentially valuable resource. However there is little incentive at the moment for private companies to share this, especially where information was commercially sensitive.
- 2.8 It was noted that completeness suggests that the collection of this evidence would be a 'one-off' process whereas in reality this would require ongoing review. In addition it would require culture change within organisations to develop processes to continue to supply the information.

- 2.9 The confidence in achieving the aim to support long term funding requirements was shown as not changing between 2006 and 2009. The UK-EOF has scoped the issues but has not implemented any change, this would need to come from within organisations as detailed in point 2.8. Current funding cycles are still a barrier to funding long-term observations and mechanisms still need to be developed which can overcome this issue and ensure that valuable information collecting activities are not lost/discontinued.

### 3. Paper B: UK-EOF Progress and Future Challenges

- 3.1 The group were asked to comment the structure and overall messages contained within the Progress and Future Challenges document and whether it adequately reflected the progress made by the UK-EOF. All felt that the document was well written and informative but that it needed to be more succinct, more definite in its recommendations and more positive about the amount of progress made in the last 18 months.
- 3.2 A summary box of information should be included at the start of each section to show the key information that the ERFF Main Board need to know – focussed upon messages from the UK-EOF analysis rather than processes.
- 3.3 The executive summary should then be developed to synthesize these key messages in no more than 2 pages of text. The executive summary should also stress the benefits that a collaborative approach such as UK-EOF could bring. It would also be important to highlight the relevance of the UK-EOF collaborative approach in terms of the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and the current Public Value Programme within government.
- 3.4 The UK-EOF process diagram, shown on a PowerPoint slide (Figure 1) should be redrafted to describe the current UK-EOF outputs as benefits and then be included within the Progress and Future document.

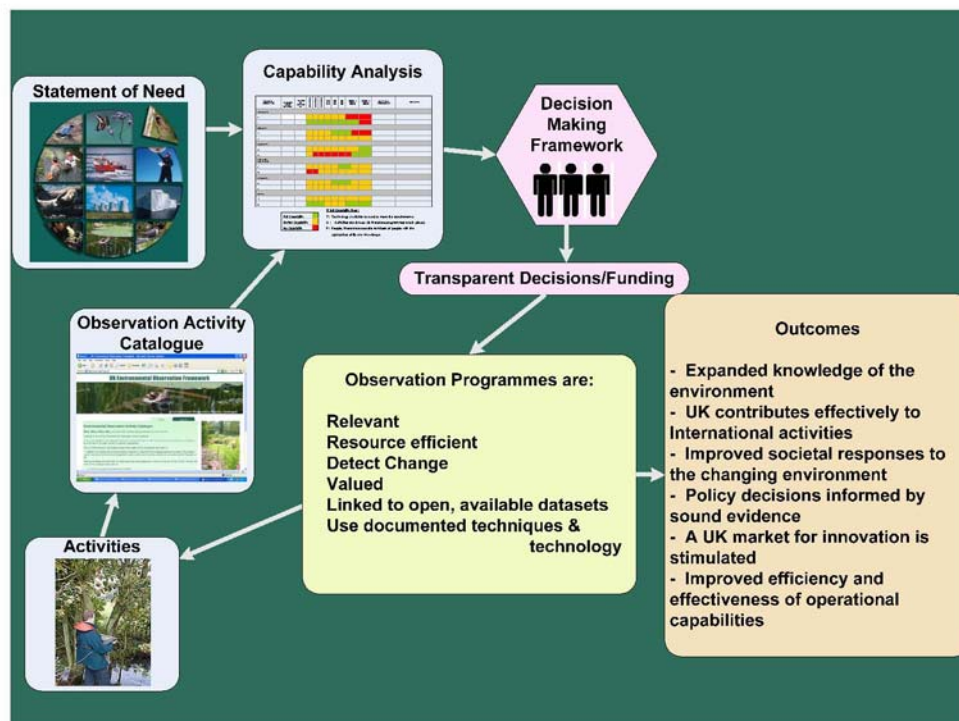


Figure 1: UK-EOF process diagram

- 3.5 All agreed that section in section 2.2, the section titled 'The questions we need to answer' could be dramatically reduced. A link should be provided to the

- Statement of Need Workshop Report which fully details the outcomes of the 6 domain workshops held in June/July 2009.
- 3.6 The group were shown a version of the PSVI model with proportional spend per organisation. Organisations had been placed in the spheres according to the balance of public/private funding and scientific/policy work they fund. It was agreed that this diagram had been a useful figure for the management group to see and may be useful to show as a slide at the ERFF Main Board meeting but should not be included in the report as it required explanation to avoid it being used out of context.
- 3.7 DECC's data had been submitted too late for inclusion into Figure 2 and the overall cost table in the draft of the 'Progress and Future Challenges report'. The secretariat agreed to add DECC's spend to both of these before it was submitted to the ERFF Main Board.

**Action 3: Secretariat to add DECC's spend on environmental observations to Figure 2 and the 'Progress and Future Challenges' Report before the papers were submitted to the ERFF Main Board.**

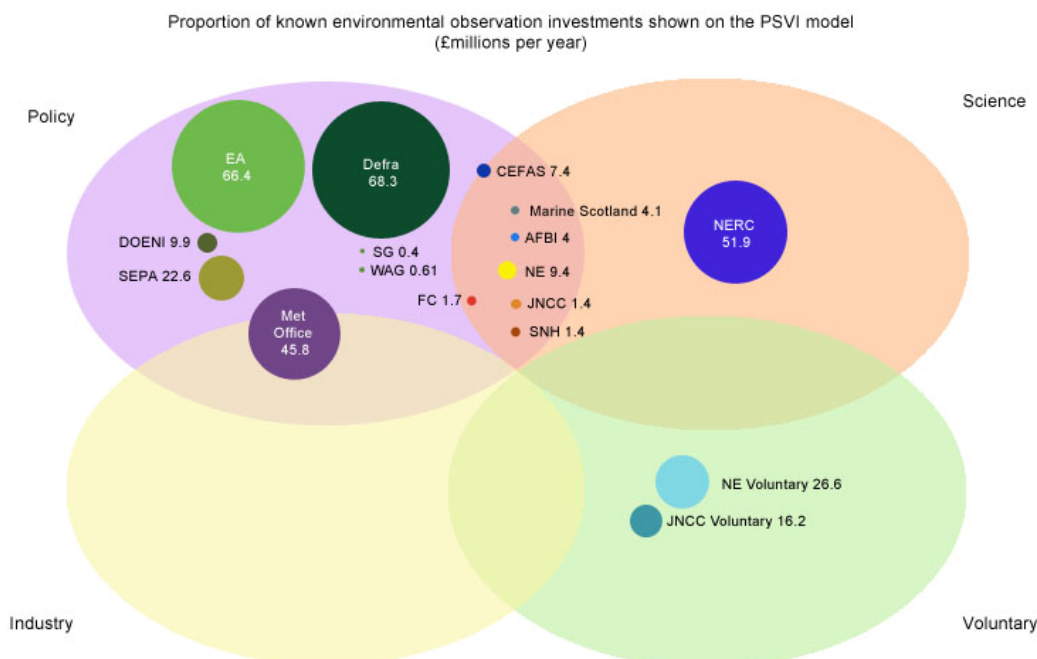


Figure 2: PSVI model, referred to in 3.6 above.

- 3.8 The secretariat were actioned to redraft the Progress and Future Challenges report, incorporating the comments from the Management Group and focussing most closely on the Executive Summary.

**Action 4: Secretariat to redraft the Progress and Future Challenges document incorporating the Management Group comments by 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009.**

- 3.9 The secretariat requested input from the Management Group to prepare examples of the benefits of UK-EOF. Ian Davidson agreed to assist in terms on the requirements of the PVP programme and Keith Porter will write a section on the collaboration through ESA.

**Action 5: Ian Davison and Keith Porter to provide examples of the benefits of UK-EOF (PVP and ESA respectively) for incorporation into the Progress and Future Challenges Report by 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009.**

**4. Paper C: Draft Decision Making Framework**

- 4.1 The chair summarised the significant progress that had been made and the support given by Bob Watson and the attendees at the 17<sup>th</sup> September Decision Making meeting.
- 4.2 The two main issues to discuss were:
  - How and who will use the framework?
  - Are the criteria correct?
- 4.3 The discussion focused on who would make decisions. A collective decision group would be important but the final decision should lie with the funder. The framework will act to help organisations make better decisions, but not make the decisions for them.
- 4.4 MG members suggested a peer review process be used to encourage organisations to review each others programmes and activities to aid the decision making progress, in the light of budget cuts, thus creating a collective decision making approach. The group were informed that Bob Watson had already stressed that the framework could be useful to test all existing programmes to evaluate their worth.
- 4.5 It was suggested that the wording 'central body' should be replaced by 'Decision Making Body' as the former suggests a new organisation will be formed.
- 4.6 The need for a 'scalable' framework was highlighted that can be applied at all levels (from research leader, centre director, Research Council Director, Chief Executive or equivalents in government departments).
- 4.7 It was proposed that the title 'Decision making Framework' could be changed to 'Collaborative Framework' which would indicate a formalised process which encouraged the collaboration of activities rather than the collaboration of organisations. This was however considered too weak by some group members. It was agreed that the two options (collaborative vs. decision making) would be presented to the Main Board and that they would be asked to agree the way forward.
- 4.8 The group agreed that the criteria were acceptable and at a generic level incorporated all issues but were keen to know how activities would be prioritised.
- 4.9 The next stage would be to provide test cases for how to use them in different circumstances which could show how decisions could be made. The following management group members agreed to test these criteria before the next management group meeting at to report back to the group in January:
  - Keith Porter – Natural England
  - Adrian Broad – Environment Agency
  - Cathy Johnson - DECC, using Jason 3 example
  - Michael Schultz – NERC, for discussion at UK-EOF workshop

**Action 6: The following MG representatives to test the Draft Decision Making Framework within their organisations and to feedback progress as a paper to share at the next meeting in January:**

- **Keith Porter – Natural England**
- **Adrian Broad – Environment Agency**
- **Cathy Johnson - DECC, using Jason 3 example**
- **Michael Schultz – NERC, for discussion at UK-EOF workshop**

- 4.10 The secretariat would redraft the document, incorporating the Management Group comments, prior to the ERFF Main Board meeting in November. The group were asked to send any further written comments by 9<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

**Action 7: All to send any written comments on the Draft Decision Making Framework by 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009.**

**5. Paper D: UK-EOF Debate at the ERFF Main Board**

- 5.1 Paper D outlined a proposed format for the three hour section of the ERFF Main Board meeting in November that was devoted to UK-EOF. The Management Group were asked to comment upon the proposal and agree a format for the meeting.
- 5.2 The Main Board would be asked to discuss the UK-EOF Progress and Future Challenges Report and the Draft Decision Making Framework. They would also be given a cover paper which highlighted the key information, key challenges and questions that they were being asked.
- 5.3 They key questions were, given the scale of the challenge – what does the ERFF Main board want to achieve and by when i.e.
- What is it comfortable doing and with what degree of confidence in the evidence base?
  - What is too big a challenge and should be postponed?
  - How should a decision making framework function, when should it be established etc?
- 5.4 The group agreed that a covering paper would be essential to show the main messages and questions for the Main Board. This should be very carefully worded and avoid the use of ambiguous or misleading phrases such as 'decision making body'.
- 5.5 It should be stressed at the meeting that the challenge is now for organisations involved in ERFF and UK-EOF to start using and embedding the processes and tools and that progress towards the aims of the programme will not progress without this. The Main Board should be asked to test and use these processes. In the meeting the secretariat should be explicit about what support or input is required over the next 12 months, where, when and from whom?
- 5.6 The proposed meeting structure was agreed as sensible. All agreed to send any further comments to Beth Greenaway by the 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

**Action 8: All to send further comments on the ERFF Main Board meeting structure to the secretariat by 23<sup>rd</sup> October.**

- 5.7 Management Group members were asked to make contact with their ERFF Main Board representative and to brief them prior to the meeting in November.

**Action 9: All to brief their organisation's ERFF Main Board representative prior to the November meeting.**

- 5.8 All agreed that they would like to comment upon all papers before they are sent to the ERFF Main Board. The secretariat agreed to make these available by email or on Central Desktop but warned that their may be a short timescale for comments.

**Action 10: Secretariat to make the ERFF Main Board Papers available to the Management Group for comment before they are finalised and sent.**

**6. Updates from related initiatives and AOB**

### **Paper F: SEIS/GMES/GEOSS Update**

- 6.1 Robert Lowson gave the group an update on SEIS, GMES, GEO and GEOSS as detailed in Paper E. He drew the group's attention to the EEA State of the Environment Report. The next version is planned to be a 'living' i.e. updateable document. This will require member states to have IT systems which can update the information required for the report. The SENSE project is looking into how this system could work and there is scope for great efficiency if national and EU level IT systems can be joined up.
- 6.2 Within GMES discussions are ongoing concerning its future direction following the publication of the Commission Communication COM (2009) 223, which gives it a programme status in the EC. The EEA will be leading on the coordination of the required in-situ data. They are proposing to use the existing Eionet network to gather member states views and data. This may mean that the UK and other member states will need to adapt their frameworks for input to the Eionet.
- 6.3 GEOSS is an initiative to ensure that there is a stronger connection between earth observation and societal benefits through shared practices and disciplines, rather than just a disconnected collection of projects. Important steps have been made towards this including the development of a common architecture for delivering GEOSS projects and draft rules for data sharing.
- 6.4 The connection between the three initiatives was queried and Robert clarified that they are separate initiatives despite their commonality and represent 3 different elements of how the marketplace for environmental information needs to develop. Member states need to ensure that they approach them coherently.

### **ERFF Review**

- 6.5 The review of ERFF is ongoing. A workshop was held in September to review what ERFF should be doing. The secretariat will now work with the ERFF Main Board to clarify how this should be done. This will be the other major topic for discussion (other than the UK-EOF) at the November meeting. The consultant's report will be available in December and an implementation plan will be developed in January in order that the findings from the review can be implemented through the new ERFF Delivery Plan from April 2010.
- 6.6 It was noted that the issues of governance within ERFF would influence those same decisions within the UK-EOF project although there is enough support and funding for the UK-EOF project to continue to 2013, even if ERFF were not to continue.
- 6.7 The link between ERFF and LEWC was queried. Mary Barkham agreed that there was still some uncertainty in the community and explained that whilst LWEC was essentially a research delivery programme, ERFF's remit was the evidence collection and debate by member organisations towards steering the direction of programmes like LWEC and others. ERFF needs to provide the strategic direction and evidence to support the delivery of environmental evidence programmes.

### **Defra Evidence Investment Strategy**

- 6.8 The Defra Evidence Investment Strategy was initiated to try and understand at a programme level what the department's requirements for evidence were. It has been difficult for Defra to get a definitive picture of its investment in observations specifically as there is no specific budget for these (which are often included as part of spend in other budget areas e.g. research). The department has however gathered the best picture to date of Defra's total evidence investment which is approximately £230 million/yr split approximately 50/50 between Research and other (including monitoring and surveillance

- 6.9 The following issues influence how the EIS will be received/used:
- Is there an Evidence budget? Previously Defra has been devolving this responsibility to project managers and there is a debate as to whether this should be altered.
  - Pressure on budgets and the Public Value Programme (PVP). How can a strategy stating that evidence is underfunded fit in with the pressure to reduce public spending?
  - Upcoming election – the principles need to be able to survive the potential change in government.
- 6.10 The following issues within Defra have been highlighted through the EIS themes:
- Partnerships and linking to the PVP – there is a need for a functioning ERFF to facilitate debate and for a strong partnership in LWEC.
  - Prioritisation with Defra – there have been some suggested changes in investments but these do not represent huge shifts and political sensitivities will influence these decisions.
  - How evidence is managed to deliver policy goals – there is an intention to make these links transparent.
  - Skills to translate evidence – within and outside the organisation.
  - How evidence is flagged within business processes.
  - How Defra commission and procure evidence and use experts in this – this has links with the ERFF Skills Needs Review.
- 6.11 Budget holders have praised the process and Defra will discuss sharing their experience with other departments at the Management Board on the 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

## **7. Date, format and location of the next meeting**

- 7.1 The Scottish Government had offered to host the next UK-EOF Management Group in Edinburgh. The group agreed this as the venue for the January 2010 meeting.
- 7.2 The agenda for this meeting will include:
- Reporting back from the Main Board
  - Setting and agreeing priorities for 2010
  - Providing confirmation of funding by each organisation
  - Discussing the data work in more detail
  - Piloting the Draft Decision Making Framework
- 7.3 There will be a large amount of important material to be covered and the group discussed whether the meeting should be held over one or two days. The secretariat agreed to send a proposed agenda and timings/duration to the group for comment upon before making this decision.

**Action 11: Secretariat to send proposal for agenda, duration and timings to the MG for comment by 23<sup>rd</sup> October.**

**Meeting Closed 15.00**

## 8. Table of Actions

No.	Action	Whom	Deadline
1	MG members to forward any comments on the Data Initiative proposal by 23 <sup>rd</sup> October.	All	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2009
2	Remaining organisations to submit a statement describing the most important thing that their organisation would like to see achieved by the UK-EOF by 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2009.	CCW, DECC, Defra, EA, JNCC, SEPA, SG, SNH and WAG	16 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
3	Secretariat to add DECC's spend on environmental observations to Figure 2 and the 'Progress and Future Challenges' Report before the papers were submitted to the ERFF Main Board.	Sec.	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2009
4	Secretariat to redraft the Progress and Future Challenges document incorporating the Management Group comments by 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2009.	Sec.	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2009
5	Ian Davison and Keith Porter to provide examples of the benefits of UK-EOF (PVP and ESA respectively) for incorporation into the Progress and Future Challenges Report by 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2009.	ID and KP	16 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
6	Action 5: The following MG representatives to test the Draft Decision Making Framework within their organisations and feedback progress as a paper to share at the next meeting in January: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keith Porter – Natural England</li> <li>• Adrian Broad – Environment Agency</li> <li>• Cathy Johnson - DECC, using Jason 3 example</li> <li>• Michael Schultz – NERC, for discussion at UK-EOF workshop</li> </ul>	KP, MS, AB & CJ	9 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
7	All to send any further comments on the Draft Decision Making Framework by 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2009.	All	9 <sup>th</sup> October 2009
8	All to send further comments on the ERFF Main Board meeting structure to the secretariat by 23 <sup>rd</sup> October.	All	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2009
9	All to brief their organisation's ERFF Main Board representative prior to the November meeting.	All	12 <sup>th</sup> November 2009
10	Secretariat to make the ERFF Main Board Papers available to the Management Group for comment before they are finalised.	Sec.	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2009
11	Secretariat to send proposal for agenda, duration and timings to the MG for comment by 23 <sup>rd</sup> October.	Sec.	23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2009