

ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FUNDERS' FORUM
UK- Environmental Observation Framework
8th Management Group Meeting
January 2010

Final Minutes

Attendees:

Ian Davidson	Defra (Chair)
Susan Ballard	ERFF
Alice Bunn	BNSC/ BIS
Peter Costigan	Defra
Richard Evans	WAG
Liz Fox	Defra
Wendy McKinley	DOE NI
Cathy Johnson	DECC
Tom Leatherland	SEPA
Robert Lowson	EEA / GMES / SEIS
Keith Porter	Natural England
Gill Ryall	Met Office (observer)
Michael Schultz	NERC
Helen Sellars	Forestry Commission
Ron Stagg	SG
Bruce Truscott	Met Office
Richard Walmsley	EA
Lawrence Way	JNCC
Beth Greenaway	UK-EOF
Darien Simon	UK-EOF
Gemma Truelove	UK-EOF
Amber Vater	UK-EOF (notes)

Apologies:

Adrian Barraclough	EA
Mary Barkham	ERFF
Roger Coppock	FC (19 th January only)
Clifford Henry	DOE NI
Paul Mason	GECC

19.00-22.00, 18th January 2010- Royal British Hotel, Edinburgh, EH2 2AN

1. Introduction and Welcome

1.1 Ron Stagg welcomed members to Scotland and to the dinner/ discussion on the Decision Support Framework. Michael Schultz gave an update on the rapid progress that had been made with developing this area of the UK-EOF and outlined the aims of the evening to allow an informal discussion of the concepts and overall direction of the decision support framework before the details of the criteria were discussed in the morning. Specifically he asked that over dinner members;

- discuss the overall concept and principles
- discuss the nature and role of decision support body
- discuss outstanding issues on process

During dinner attendees were asked to note ideas and issues about the framework and were encouraged to discuss their concerns and hopes.. A list of comments is provided in Annex A along with detailed notes of the discussion. Beth and Michael summarised the issues and ideas raised and as a group, members discussed these.

The key points were:

- **Implementing the framework** – there is now an urgent need for a common set of scalable tools as each individual organisation is facing tough decisions now. In the medium and longer term the focus can be on bringing these individual project decisions into a UK wide forum for discussion.
- **Transparent and Evidence based tool** – the need for the framework to enable more transparency and use of evidence in the decision process was fully supported by members
- **Complexity** – there are many complexities to funding observation activities which make the process non linear e.g. funding streams, political will, and multiple drivers. These could make a relatively simple process much more complex in reality, but there is a need to start with a simple process and to later make allowances for these complex issues.

1.2 Ian concluded the evening as productive and expressed the importance of moving the decision work forward during the following day's meeting. He welcomed the enthusiastic debate and encouraged members to consider the outstanding issues during the next day's meeting. There were still details to resolve but in general the tools are being actively sought by many organisations and there are no issues of sufficient magnitude to need a rethink in overall direction.

Action 1: Secretariat to collate responses from members concerning ideas and issues around the Decision Support Framework, 29th January 2010 (see attached Annex A)

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 The chair welcomed attendees to the 8th UK-EOF Management Group meeting, introducing new representatives from Defra, Liz Fox, BNSC/BIS, Alice Bunn and an observer from the Met Office, Gill Ryall (Head of Observations). Members had attended an evening event the previous night, where they had been welcomed to Edinburgh by Ron Stagg and were updated about the Decision Support Framework by Michael Schultz.
- 1.2 The purpose of the meeting was outlined;
- Test the Decision Support Framework
 - Agree overall UK-EOF priorities and expenditure for 2010/11
 - Approve plans for the Data workstream
 - Confirm ongoing funding for 2010/11
- 1.3 There were no comments received about the draft minutes of the 7th Management Group Meeting (Paper A) which were agreed as correct.

2. Update and progress – Paper B

- 2.1 Beth gave an update on progress of the UK-EOF programme. Considerable work had been achieved and the workstreams had progressed significantly. Members acknowledged that recognition of the UK-EOF was increasing and various organisations had approached the secretariat to help develop other related initiatives.
- 2.2 It was summarised that UK-EOF remains an ambitious programme trying to achieve a wide range of goals with aims to stimulate cultural change, which requires ongoing commitment from the members. This commitment had been reinforced by the ERFF Main Board in November 2009, where considerable support and recognition of the long-term vision was given and the need to focus on specific aspects was emphasised. The future direction for each of the workstreams now needed to be agreed to enable the secretariat to prioritise for 2010/11.
- 2.3 Beth informed the group about the outcomes of the ERFF Main Board in November 2009. UK-EOF progress was well received, and the significant work load was recognised. The board made the following suggestions;
- Ensure that it is clear what the scope is of each part of the programme e.g. *the catalogue does contain the activities of all the 220 organisations although only the top 18 public sector organisations have been asked to submit costs.*
 - *The wording on axis of the PSVI diagram should be reconsidered. Instead of 'have to' and 'want to' it was suggested that 'legislative/ regulatory purposes' and 'blue skies' or 'to expand knowledge' would be less contentious.*
 - *It was agreed that the scope of the UK-EOF should be widened to include the relevant social sciences (e.g. health data). ESRC offered to help the UK-EOF team identify the key data sets.*
 - *The headline issues used to inform the Statement of Need (SoN) should be rephrased to make it clear that both marine and terrestrial issues are included.*

- *The headline issue regarding science innovation and technology is not really an 'issue'. However, the board considered that it should be included as the development of new technology can lead to new opportunities to observe the environment and, conversely, the need to undertake observations of the environment can drive the development of new technology.*
- *The focus now should be on the use of the tools created rather than ensuring they capture every last detail.*

2.4 The PVSI diagram had been edited in line with Main Board suggestions. It was presented to the members and agreed that the diagram would be updated as necessary in the future.

Action 2: Secretariat to continue to develop the PSVI model, where appropriate, for future use (ongoing)

3. 2009 Progress and Challenges Report - Paper C

3.1 The UK-EOF 2009 Progress and Challenges report is a significant milestone and was a key deliverable in 2009, summarising the progress made during the first 18 months and the challenges remaining. The report was seen as a useful tool for presenting the progress made by the programme and that it should, where appropriate, be used to promote UK-EOF. The report was written for the ERFF Main Board so it was agreed that a short opening boxed paragraph would be inserted at the front of the document explaining the purpose of the paper and the outcomes of the board to save time re-writing the document before release.

3.2 The Decision Support Framework section in the Progress and Challenges Report was seen as contentious by some members and suggested it may cause concern amongst organisations. It was agreed that the wording needs to be softened to allow for discussion on the scope of implementation. Susan Ballard agreed to proof read the document for any other contentious content.

Action 3: Susan Ballard to soften the Decision Support Framework language and highlight any other contentious issues by 29th January 2010

Action 4: Management Group members to forward any further comments concerning the Progress and Challenges report to the secretariat, by 5th February 2010

Action 5: Secretariat to amend the 2009 Progress and Challenges report, where necessary, and add a paragraph explaining the purpose of the report and the ERFF Main Board views and recommendations by 19th February 2010

3.3 Ian Davidson agreed to write an accompanying letter of support for the continuation of UK-EOF that can be used to circulate with the report.

Action 6: Ian Davidson to provide a cover letter to accompany the Progress and Challenges report

Action 7: Secretariat to highlight the release of the Progress and Challenges Report in the next UK-EOF newsletter by 19th February 2010

4. Statement of Need - Next Steps – Paper D

4.1 Towards a Statement of Need (version - January 2010) was discussed in preparation for its release. Members noted the significant additions to the documents from all the workshops last summer and agreed to one more week for final comments before the document was ready for wider release e.g. via the website. Gill Ryall offered to supply track changed comments on behalf of the Met Office, about making the best of the environment.

Action 8: Gill Ryall to forward comments on the SoN document concerning 'making the best of the environment' by 29th January 2010

Action 9: Secretariat to add Management Group and Main Board comments and release the SoN on the website ASAP.

4.2 It is envisaged that the January 2010 versions would now be 'stable' until next version of the SoN document will be released in the summer 2010 and would include the first round of information collected from the social economic community.

Societal Issues

4.3 The ERFF Main Board recommended the inclusion of societal issues in the UK-EOF's scope, but recognised that this has the potential to become a significant workload. Members agreed with the Main Board decisions, acknowledging the value and risks associated with this exercise.

4.4 It was agreed that the secretariat should continue to liaise with members of the social science community and hold a workshop in the next few months to gather information which will support and link to the Statement of Need as well as scope the relevant datasets. Organisations such as the Office of National Statistics and ESRC were suggested. It was also suggested that the number of links with UK, European and international initiatives/ data centres would increase as the social economic work evolves.

Action 10: Secretariat to liaise with societal needs community and organise a workshop to inform the SoN and the scope of the datasets work, by end of May 2010

Action 11: Secretariat to estimate the scope of the societal issues work and discuss the workshop to the 10th Management Group Meeting in July 2010

Future Direction of the Statement of Need

4.5 The long-term vision for the Statement of Need was discussed. The scope of workstream 1a could include gap analysis, road mapping, and prioritisation.

4.6 The strong links between the SoN and Decision Support Framework were conveyed. The Main Board had discussed the need for these tools to be used to identify the 'crown jewels' of UK environmental monitoring activities. Members expressed their concerns over this statement, suggesting that there is a need to prioritise within the balanced suite of observations. This process still needs to be defined and it was suggested that trials could be carried out using a thematic approach e.g. biodiversity and marine.

Action 12: The Management Group to agree the future direction of workstream 1a, in April 2010.

5. The Decision ‘Support’ Framework – Paper E

5.1 The Chair gave a summary of the discussion the previous evening and outlined the outstanding issues as defining;

- the scope of activities to include in the decision making process so that it is useful and not a burden
- the level, number of , and expertise required from the ‘support body’
- how the decision process will work
- the effectiveness of the ‘balanced scorecard’
- the detail of the criteria

5.2 The need for a collective understanding of existing activities and what would be part of the decision process was emphasised to allow a degree of trust to form between member organisations. This will allow future decisions to be transparent and for organisations confidently make decisions and inform others of their actions. The need to be able to use the framework at all levels within an organisation and between organisations was emphasised. It was acknowledged that this requires cultural change which could be a significant barrier to the progress of the framework.

5.3 It was agreed that not all activities will need to be ‘processed’ in full by the decision support framework. Small scale activities, with single funders are unlikely to need the support and informed advice of other organisations, whereas large scale, cross cutting issues involving more than one organisation will be most likely to benefit for the informal support of this framework. It was suggested that the secretariat could provide a platform to guide organisations as to what level of support should be sought.

Action 13: Management Group to decide if the UK-EOF secretariat should act as a platform for support for organisations when using the Decision Support Framework at the next Management Group Meeting in April 2010

5.4 Michael Schultz introduced the breakout session. Members were asked to form 4 small groups to discuss an hypothetical scenario and apply the decision criteria as if they were the proposing organisation and as an external organisation. Each group reported back on

- the appropriateness and usability of criteria, traffic lights and scorecard
- who within organisations would do the work
- how process could be improved

5.5 Group 1 – Hypothetical Scenario: The Forestry Commission, a co-funder of the Countryside Survey, is considering withdrawing its funding (group members: SB, DS, KP, and RE). The group thought that the criteria represented a good starting point but required significant re-phrasing and re-structuring. The traffic light system was somewhat limiting; many of the answers require more detail to fully address the criteria and provide a useful answer. The ‘degree’ of agreement was also seen to be lost by using this system as the traffic light system limits the variability of potential answers. The group thought that there was not a need to involve a higher body in the decision support process; those directly involved in the decisions should be consulted for their advice.

5.6 Group 2 – Hypothetical Scenario: Jason III requires new capital investment from UK agencies, to form part of the European contribution to a global collaboration for the continuation of observing ocean altimetry (group members: AB, BG, RL, ID, TL, LF, CJ

and BT). It was suggested that the criteria questions themselves needed refinement to be able to capture all the information required. This scenario raised the question of ownership of a new activity where there is no lead organisation, who will initiate or start the process? Altogether the process captured the wide range of user views, it needs further work to define the classification system with the potential to add further qualitative detail. A clear benefit of this process is defining other key users of an activity and having them all in one room to discuss and agree.

5.7 Group 3 – Hypothetical Scenario: The lead funder of the National Soil Inventory is considering withdrawing funds for this activity (PC, GT, HS, RW, and WM). The group suggested two sets of questions could be used; one for the proposing organisation and one for other organisations, in order to gather the maximum amount of information from each group. Again, the scoring system did not seem to produce the required results and members suggested applying a value or score could be more useful. The details of some criteria need further explanation and the traffic light scoring does not provide a justified outcome or sufficient detail to answer the question the criteria is addressing. The balance of the sections was also questioned. Should/ could sections have more weighting over each other? Group 3 suggested that UK-EOF could support this framework by bringing together a wider prospective audience to assist in the process.

5.8 Group 4 – Hypothetical Scenario: Multi-agency funding is required for the new Integrated Carbon Observation System ICOS (AV, MS, LW, GR, RS). Lawrence reported on the group's discussion, highlighting the need for more detail to accompany the criteria. It was suggested that a 'business case' type report should be put together in conjunction with the criteria scorecard to support the proposal. The report would be scalable in consideration of the scale of the proposed activity, culminating in a standard format, small scale summary (e.g. 4 pages) to be used as the communication tool. All activities should go through this process as standard practice, but not all would need to go through the whole system requiring input from other organisations if the activity is small scale, or did not effect other organisations either as funders or users. It was suggested that two sets of guidelines may be more useful than one to clarify what is required from each criteria from the proposer and from external organisations. It was thought that UK-EOF should support this process and produce guidelines for the process.

5.9 Michael prompted members to forward any specific comments about the criteria to the secretariat. The session had brought out key messages that need to be captured by the criteria and the process itself. Further input is required from each organisation and consideration of the impacts of making decisions should be addressed, especially in terms of starting new activities. It was concluded that there is a need to focus on the outcomes, (i.e. economic, social and environmental benefits) rather than the details of how measurements themselves are taken; if the benefits and outcomes are clear, buy-in from organisations will be easily achieved.

Action 14: Members to forward further comments on the detail of the criteria to the Secretariat by 26th February 2010

5.10 The real value of the decision process will come when organisations making changes to observation programmes openly discuss the changes and potential impacts with those who may be affected. This relies on communication, trust and having enough time to consider alternative options. In this current climate these may be considerable challenges but should remain a key long term aspiration.

5.11 Further development and trials are needed before the tool can be agreed, signed off and used independently. Trials could be based on themes e.g. the MSCC were considered an excellent example of the marine domain needed to tool in the next few

months. NERC, EA and Defra had also already agreed to use the tool to assist their decision process. These lessons learnt can then be fed back into the tools.

Action 15: Secretariat to consider the feedback from the Management group and undertake further work to develop the criteria and retest by 31st March 2010

Action 16: NERC, EA and Defra representatives to liaise with the secretariat about workshops planned in February 2010

5.12 Once the tool is developed, the process beyond April 2010 needs to involve all members to ensure decisions are made with the UK (balanced/ prioritised) suite in mind. Members were asked to actively encourage their organisations to sign-up and embed the framework within their internal business procedures, at all levels of decision making.

5.13 It was suggested that each member organisation identifies (using the catalogue if necessary) a set of activities their organisation would/could bring to the table as part of the UK 'pot'. of activities which would make up the balanced / prioritised suite.

Action 17: Members to discuss options for the uptake and use of the decision tool at the next Management Group Meeting in April 2010.

Action 18: Each member organisation to submit (or identify using the catalogue) a list of key monitoring activities for consideration within the UK suite by the next Management Group Meeting in April 2010

6. UK-EOF Data Initiative - Paper F

6.1 Beth gave an introduction and update on the data initiative. The compelling argument replaces (is instead of) the business plan which was originally requested by the 2007 Think Tank. Having scoped out the activities the UK need to take to enhance data sharing, most of those require personal resources rather than large capital spend. Therefore this is a case for what the UK should do and then more specifically what the UK-EOF should do to take action towards the overall vision. It comprises 6 areas (work packages) and which should be owned or progressed by others (note Paper F was not written specifically for the Management Group, but for a wider community).

6.2 Members were reminded of the scope of the data initiative; being purely environmental observations (not research) and that the catalogue holds metadata and points to the data. UK_EOF will not hold the data.

6.3 After discussion the general consensus was that UK-EOF should be providing the tools but that not all of the work packages were necessarily the highest priority. For example delivering the status of ability of UK to share observation data, including creating a data status table (Work Package C) was not seen to be an immediate priority..

6.4 Work Package D was supported by the members. A focal point to communicate information from the various UK and international initiatives was seen as a vital role for UK-EOF. INSPIRE and SEIS were brought up as important initiatives that the devolved agencies were keen to respond to without duplicating any work being done by the UK-EOF. The need for the devolved agencies to be informed of where the information they submit to the catalogue goes was also raised. With the recent appointment of Darien Simon to the UK-EOF Data Manager role, communication of the data work will increase and this work package will be driven forward. Members were also encouraged to keep the secretariat up to date with any relevant data initiatives within organisations that the team may not be aware of. It was also noted that SEIS was developing rapidly.

A waste expert (from Defra) had been appointed to improve the content and quality of information in the SEIS and UK-EOF catalogue.

Action 19: Members to inform Darien of new/ existing data initiatives within their organisations or domain areas (ongoing)

6.5 The group agreed that Work Package E Contracts and Citations could be useful and was currently an issue that members were addressing. It was agreed that good practice should be identified and encouraged using the UK-EOF to eliminate common bad practices. It was seen as important to engage with data collection and processing communities; unless cultural change was made by the data collectors, it would not be possible to improving the sharing of data or the creation of good metadata. .

Action 20: Ron Stagg, Lawrence Way and Darien Simon to liaise about current good practice for data contracts, by 5th February 2010

6.6 The role of the Data Advisory Group (DAG) was outlined and members agreed that this group should oversee the data work. Each of the member organisations could provide an expert to sit on the DAG. Liz Fox will provide feedback to the Management Group after each DAG meeting.

Action 21: Secretariat to send membership list to Management Group members to consider if their Data Advisory Group representative is the most appropriate person to sit on this group, by 5th February 2010

Action 22: Liz Fox to provide feedback from the DAG to the Management Group, as necessary

6.7 The allocation of 2 FTE posts for the data work was discussed in relation to the 1FTE on the decision tool and 1 on Statement of Need and Societal Issues workstreams. This was seen as the minimum requirement to progress the data policy and catalogue work effectively.

The following work packages were agreed as priority for 2010/11;

- A – catalogue development to include updating content, infrastructure, information flow and outputs to be relevant for INSPIRE/ GMES/ SEIS and GEO
- B – UK-EOF as a focal point to deliver and communicate progress with UK, European and international initiatives
- C – Progress work on data policies, contracts and citations. this was seen as a good short term goal, currently needing assessment and potentially bringing large scale benefits to many organisations
- D – scoping the issues around ensuring sufficient capacity and capability for physical data to be managed, stored and shared

Other work packages / parts of the work packages will be considered after the second stage of development has been completed in 2012.

7. The Environmental Observations Activity Catalogue – What next? – Paper G

7.1 An update of the existing catalogue and the plans for its upgrade and was provided by Gemma Truelove. The catalogue is seen as one of the most important tools for the UK-EOF and the need to ensure its long term sustainability should be prioritised. Members

agreed that the quality of the content, improving the information flow so that the content was up to date and providing links to the datasets the activity generates were priorities.

7.2 The need for organisations to take on the responsibility to update their information was pressed.

Action 23: Members to nominate a person within their organisation to be tasked with checking and update catalogue content on a regular basis.

7.3 The current catalogue infrastructure (the back end) is inadequate to meet the needs of users (as defined by the UK-EOF needs and the wider users). The existing fields either need to be refined because they do not conform to standards or new fields added to allow the information requested by users to be held. The initial database content was migrated from the 2005 access database which was constructed for a very different purpose. Therefore the first draft of the catalogue – the one on line now – is limited in fields. It was agreed that the secretariat would undertake a small scale review of catalogue users to provide evidence for the key priorities for development. If UK-EOF can align standards, and make it easy for organisations to submit information once to this catalogue and not separately to INSPIRE/ SEIS/ GEO and GMES this will benefit member organisations.

Action 24: Secretariat to contact known users to gather feedback to confirm which areas of catalogue development were priorities by April 2010

Action 25: Secretariat to continue discussions with Interoperability Board to ensure catalogue is compliant and makes it easier for organisations to comply with INSPIRE for observation data.

8. Financial Statements and Commitments – Paper H

8.1 Financial estimates were noted and funding commitments were discussed. The budget is healthy for 2010 with 9 confirmed funders. However from March 2011 the original 3 yr commitments from NERC and Defra cease and hence there is huge uncertainty. The issues surrounding this uncertainty and the current annual commitment that organisations have with UK-EOF were discussed. Of particular concern is the affect on the ability to recruitment and keep staff. A 2-year funding commitment was proposed by the ERFF main board to assist securing staff. Ian and Michael, as the representatives of the two major funders of UK-EOF, agreed to discuss the issue further.

Action 26: Ian Davidson and Michael Schultz to discuss the proposed 2-year funding commitment and feedback their decision to the secretariat end February 2010

The risks associated with offering 2 year fixed term posts were discussed and the Management Group agreed that there was sufficient certainty in the funding and under spend to cover for potential redundancy issues. Therefore the Management Group agreed that securing staff to undertake the core work of the UKEOF was the most crucial at this stage.

Action 27: UK-EOF to consider the most appropriate way to fill the 3 Band 6 positions on 2- year contracts from April 2010 to April 2012.

8.2 Agreement was reached that priorities should, in consideration of the current economic climate and financial issues facing the member's organisations, concentrate efforts on providing knowledge, guidance and a forum for discussion.

8.3 Wendy McKinley informed the group that NIEA may not be able to contribute full to UK-EOF on par with previous contributions. NIEA are awaiting budgets for the next financial year and will inform UK-EOF when a decision has been made.

Action 28: Wendy McKinley to inform UK-EOF as soon as possible if NIEA can invest in the programme for 2010/11

9. Deliverables, Workstream Priorities and Responsibilities – Paper I

9.1 The group discussed the priorities and deliverables for 2010/11. Many of the priorities are interlinked and rely on significant secretariat time and stakeholder engagement. It was suggested that the secretariat should attempt to identify potential additional stakeholders to increase the number of organisations that could be utilised to help deliver workstream priorities. Members suggested BBSRC, ESRC, DIFD and MoD could be approached.

Action 29: Secretariat to amend Table 1 (secretariat resource spread across the workstreams) for presentation at the next Management Group Meeting by April 2010

Action 30: Secretariat to ask BBSRC and ESRC for potential inputs to the UK-EOF by 31st March 2010

9.2 The priorities for 2010/11, with amendments to those outlined in workstream 2 were agreed.

9.3 Members agreed that the priority statements previously submitted by each representative to the UK-EOF were accurate (Paper I, Annex A).

Action 31: Secretariat to include the list of organisational priority statements in the next update of the UK-EOF Delivery Plan by April 2010

9.4 Members discussed the Risk Log presented in Paper I, Annex D. It was agreed that risk 10 could be upgraded to green and members were asked to contact the secretariat if there are any further amendments should be made.

Action 32: Members to contact the secretariat informing them of any additional changes to be made to the Risk Log by 5th February 2010

Action 33: Secretariat to update the risk log accordingly by 12th February 2010

9.5 It was agreed that the suggested changes made to the Terms of Reference were suitable for use.

Action 34: Secretariat to accept the suggested changes made to the UK-EOF Management Group Terms of Reference and delivery plan by April 2010

10. Communications Progress Report – Paper J

- 10.1 Susan Ballard introduced herself and her role to the Management Group. The focal point of a UK-EOF communication plan will be to develop a web based platform, in order to promote the benefits and value of the UK-EOF. It was highlighted that the current ERFF website was hindering the communication of UK-EOF due to the difficulties in accessing relevant information.
- 10.2 ERFF secretariat is planning to introduce a system whereby each of the secretariat staff is assigned to two or three member organisation to gather intelligence. This information will be fed back to other staff to keep ERFF informed and updated about key issues and priorities of member organisations. Members will be contacted by the relevant member of the secretariat when these plans are implemented.
- 10.3 The Chair welcomed the report and reinforced the need for communications plans to focus on promoting the existing tools of the UK-EOF to encourage greater involvement and use by public sector stakeholders.

11. Reassignment / confirmation of Workstream Champions – Paper K

- 11.1 Discussion took place about the usefulness of workstream champions. The group agreed that the role of champions was to support secretariat staff and felt that it was important for members to take ownership of the work. Current workstream champions were asked as to whether they wished to continue their roles. Peter Costigan, Lawrence Way and Michael Schultz agreed to continue. Liz Fox also volunteered to help with data work.
- 11.2 Ian Davidson suggested Rachel Muckle (Defra) as a potential candidate to assist with the upcoming social science work. Workstream 4 champion Doug Wilson is no longer a member of the group; however there is no planned work for this workstream.
- 11.3 Susan Ballard also suggested a communications champion was needed and proposed Ron Stagg, who agreed to take on this role.

Action 35: Peter Costigan to champion Workstream 1a (ongoing)

Action 36: Michael Schultz to champion workstream 1b (ongoing)

Action 37: Lawrence Way and Liz Fox to champion Workstream 2 (ongoing)

Action 38: Ian Davidson to approach Rachel Muckle about assisting with workstream 1a, 5th February 2010

Action 39: Ron Stagg to champion Workstream 5 (ongoing)

12. Update from related initiatives

- 12.1 SEIS/ GMES/ GEOSS Update - Robert Lawson provided an update to each of the initiatives. A further round of SEIS country visits are planned in 2010, with the expectation that the UK visit would include dialogue with UK-EOF. Robert also explained the new I.T platform development plans for the UK's input into the State of the Environment Report. Both GMES and INPSIRE initiatives continue to move forward.

The group were also informed about the EEA's 'Eye on Earth' product launch. The website has the ability to provide large quantities of information, such as air and water quality, at the European level. The range of products available is likely to be expanded rapidly and plans are being undertaken to develop the technology and data to be able to provide a vast platform for data whilst increasing accessibility to datasets.

The GEO initiative is currently building up to a Ministerial Plenary at the end of 2010 and therefore significant work needs to be achieved beforehand. The UK-EOF is currently leading the way on some GEO issues and setting standards on an international scale, however more work is needed to align the existing initiatives to secure synergy exists between them.

12.2 ERFF Review - Susan Ballard presented some the key outcomes from the ERFF Review. UK-EOF was highlighted as a valued programme and there was potential for ERFF itself to learn lessons from the work UK-EOF had produced. Members were informed of the need to re-scope ERFF with a smaller member's body and independent chair who will potentially report to ministerial level giving ERFF a more significant remit. The next ERFF Main Board meeting (25th January 2010) will discuss further developments. Susan thanked members of the UK-EOF Management Group who were involved in the Review.

12.3 Defra Evidence and Investment Strategy - The Chair provided an update on the Defra Evidence and Investment Strategy which is due to be published on the 26th January, with an official launch to take place on the 16th February. The strategy conveys the importance and need of working towards a UK wide evidence base and includes monitoring and surveillance as well as research.

12.4 BNSC and Space Consultation - Alice Bunn briefly outlined the recent decision that was made to create a UK Space Agency. Details of how this will function and levels of funding are still to be agreed, but Lord Drayson is to act as the Senior Responsible Officer. The group aired concerns of the likely impacts of this announcement, and the pressures to maintain strong links between the technological and industrial aspects with the science and environmental needs for space observations.

13. AOB

13.1 Since 2010, is UN International Biodiversity Year. the Environmental Change Network - through the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology - has teamed up with the Natural History Museum to organise a scientific conference. The principle aim is to highlight the vital role that long-term monitoring and research plays in addressing key biodiversity-related issues, and to explore future directions for this area of research. The focus would be on charting, understanding and reacting to long-term changes in biodiversity, with a strong emphasis on the UK but also including an international dimension. This will be 16-18 November 2010 at the Natural History Museum in London.

14. Date / location of next meeting

14.1 The date and location for the next Management group meeting was proposed as London during the week of 19th – 23rd April 2010. Ian Davidson offered to provide a venue at Defra. A trawl for a specific date will be undertaken by the secretariat.

[Note: 22nd April London is confirmed]

Action 40: Secretariat to trawl and confirm a date for the 9th Management group meeting to be held at Defra in London during April 2010 by 29th January 2010 – Now 22nd April

Meeting Closed 16.20

8th UKEOF Management Group Meeting - Table of Actions

No.	Action	Whom	Deadline
1	Secretariat to collate responses from members concerning ideas and issues around the Decision Support Framework	Secretariat	29 th January 2010 see Annex A
Paper C			
2	Secretariat to continue to develop the PSVI model, where appropriate, for future use	Secretariat	Ongoing
3	Susan Ballard to re-read report to soften the Decision Support Framework language and highlight any other contentious issues to the secretariat	Susan Ballard	29 th January 2010
4	Management Group members to forward any further comments concerning the Progress and Challenges report to the secretariat	All MG	5 th February 2010
5	Secretariat to amend the 2009 Progress and Challenges report, where necessary, and add a paragraph explaining the purpose of the report and the ERFF Main Board views and recommendations	Secretariat	19 th February 2010
6	Ian Davidson to provide a cover letter to accompany the Progress and Challenges report	Ian Davidson	February 2010
7	Secretariat to highlight the release of the Progress and Challenges Report in the next UK-EOF newsletter	Secretariat	19 th February 2010
Paper D			
8	Gill Ryall to forward comments on the SoN document concerning 'making the best of the environment'	Gill Ryall	29 th January 2010
9	Secretariat to add Management Group and Main Board comments and release the current version of the SoN on the web ASAP	Secretariat	ASAP
10	Secretariat to liaise with societal needs community and organise a workshop to inform the SoN and the scope of the datasets work	Secretariat	End May 2010
11	Secretariat to estimate the scope of the societal issues work and discuss the workshop to the 10 th Management Group Meeting	Secretariat	July 2010
12	The Management Group to agree the future direction of workstream 1a	All MG	April 2010

Paper E			
13	Management Group to decide if the UK-EOF secretariat should act as a platform for support for organisations when using the Decision Support Framework at the next Management Group Meeting	All MG	April 2010
14	Members to forward further comments on the detail of the criteria to the Secretariat	All MG	26 th February 2010
15	Secretariat to consider the feedback from the Management group and undertake further work to develop the criteria and retest	Secretariat	31 st March 2010
16	NERC, EA and Defra representatives to liaise with the secretariat about workshops	Secretariat, Michael Schultz, Ian Davidson, Richard Walsmley	26 th February 2010
17	Members to discuss options for the uptake and use of the decision tool at the next Management Group Meeting	All MG	April 2010
18	Each member organisation to submit (or identify using the catalogue) a list of key monitoring activities for consideration within the UK suite by the next Management Group Meeting	All MG	April 2010.
Paper F			
19	Members to inform Darien of new/ existing data initiatives within their organisations (ongoing)	All MG	ongoing
20	Ron Stagg, Lawrence Way and Darien Simon to liaise about current good practice for data contracts	Secretariat and Ron Stagg	5 th February 2010
21	Secretariat to send membership list to Management Group members to consider if their Data Advisory Group representative is the most appropriate person to sit on this group	Secretariat and All MG	5 th February 2010
22	Liz Fox to provide feedback from the DAG to the Management Group, as necessary	Liz Fox	ongoing
Paper G			
23	Members to nominate a person within their organisation to be tasked with checking and update catalogue content on a regular basis.	All MG	end March 2010
24	Secretariat to contact known users to gather feedback to support catalogue development	Secretariat	April 2010

	priorities		
25	Secretariat to continue discussions with Interoperability Board to ensure catalogue is compliant and makes it easier for organisations to comply with INSPIRE for observation data		
Paper H			
26	Ian Davidson and Michael Schultz to discuss the proposed 2-year funding commitment and feedback their decision to the secretariat before the next meeting	Ian Davidson and Michael Schultz	end February 2010
27	UK-EOF to consider the most appropriate way to fill the 3 Band 6 positions on 2- year contracts from April 2010 to April 2012	Beth Greenaway	May 2010
28	Wendy McKinley to inform UK-EOF if NIEA can invest in the programme for 2010/11	Wendy McKinley	ASAP
Paper I			
29	Secretariat to amend Table 1 (secretariat resource spread across the workstreams) for presentation at the next Management Group Meeting	Secretariat	April 2010
30	Secretariat to ask BBSRC and ESRC for potential inputs to the UK-EOF	Secretariat	31 st March 2010
31	Secretariat to include the list of organisational priority statements in the next update of the UK-EOF Delivery Plan	Secretariat	April 2010
32	Members to contact the secretariat informing them of any additional changes to be made to the Risk Log	All MG	5 th February 2010
33	Secretariat to update the risk log accordingly	Secretariat	12 th February
34	Secretariat to accept the suggested changes made to the UK-EOF Management Group Terms of Reference and delivery plan	Secretariat	April 2010
Paper K			
35	Peter Costigan to champion Workstream 1a	Peter Costigan	Ongoing
36	Michael Schultz to champion workstream 1b	Michael Schultz	Ongoing
37	Lawrence Way and Liz Fox to champion Workstream 2	Lawrence Way	Ongoing

38	Ian Davidson to approach Rachel Muckle about assisting with workstream 1a	Ian Davidson	5 th February 2010
39	Ron Stagg to champion Workstream 5	Ron Stagg	Ongoing
AOB			
40	Secretariat to trawl and confirm a date for the 9 th Management group meeting to be held at Defra in London during April 2010 Confirmed as 22 nd April	Secretariat	29 th January 2010

ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FUNDERS' FORUM
UK- Environmental Observation Framework
Notes from the UK-EOF 8th Management Group
Pre meeting Decision Tool Discussion,
19.00-22.00, 18th January 2010
Royal British Hotel, Edinburgh, EH2 2AN

Attendees:

Ian Davidson	Defra
Susan Ballard	ERFF
Alice Bunn	BNSC
Roger Coppock	FC
Peter Costigan	Defra
Richard Evans	WAG
Liz Fox	Defra
Wendy McKinley	DOE NI
Cathy Johnson	DECC
Tom Leatherland	SEPA
Robert Lowson	EEA / GMES / SEIS
Keith Porter	Natural England
Gill Ryall	Met Office
Michael Schultz	NERC
Helen Sellars	Forestry Commission
Ron Stagg	SG
Bruce Truscott	Met Office
Richard Walmsley	EA
Lawrence Way	JNCC
Beth Greenaway	UK-EOF
Darien Simon	UK-EOF
Gemma Truelove	UK-EOF
Amber Vater	UK-EOF

Points of Discussion

An introduction was given by Michael about outstanding issues and concerns. The group were asked to openly discuss and note down additional ideas and issues.

- Discussion revolved around being able to make decisions at different levels within organisations and at what point should other organisations be made aware that observations are at risk. This issue was raised several times and it was recognised as an important decision for the UK-EOF process, significantly impacting external organisations. The group acknowledged that the length of time that some decisions may take. Many decisions may take several years and may involve several organisations.
- The lack of a central funding body for UK observations means the role of the support body should be central to the decision process, to enable greater synergy. It was generally accepted that the central body will act as a forum to provide guidance, support and maintain the flow of the decision support process. The body could also analyse which decisions need external guidance and which should be decided within the proposing organisation. However there was concern that this body would not be able to provide a solid knowledge base about activities and issues across all domains.

- Confidentiality was suggested as a major issue. Many organisations would not be willing to share information about potential cuts with other organisations. Many decisions will ultimately affect other organisations, thus requiring the need to build trust and drive transparency. This supports the need for, at least, the large funders of observations to cooperate and increase their potential for collaboration. If organisations are unwilling to share this information, they are likely to miss out on collaborations with other interested organisations. If organisations can work together, it will be easier to coordinate and sustain the majority of UK observations.
- It was proposed that the support body should be made up of expert facilitators to support the process. It was highlighted again, that the support body will not make decisions; this will be up to the funding organisation(s). It was also recognised that activities without a lead organisations i.e. new activities needing funding, are more constrained by this process. Who will submit such proposals?
- Members using the framework will develop trust and allow increased collaborations leading to a synergy, which works towards a balanced (and/or prioritised) suite of observations for the UK. Members were reminded that the ERFF Main Board have already bought into the framework and therefore their actions will ultimately effect proceedings. The group were reminded that funding decisions are usually made for sound business or political reasons on the part of the funding organisations however this process/ forum could have the power to influence and override decisions, if there is a wider community need for the information for example.

Summary of outstanding issues to address:

- What will the central body do? How will make up the central support body?
- How does it gain/ have authority?
- When should a ‘decision’ leave an organisation and become exposed to a ‘wider’ audience?
- Should the key aim be collaboration rather than decisions?
- How do we make decisions on an activity and put this into context of whole UK spend on observations

Issues and Ideas suggested for the decision support framework

Name	Ideas and Issues
Roger Coppock	Effective monitoring must be underpinned by sound statistics
Ron Stagg	Funding decisions are usually made for sound business reasons on the part of the funding organisations but this process may require the funder to override that decision if there is a wider community need
Richard Evans	Data needs to be sound and robust and be valued for time series analysis
Tom Leatherland	Framework conclusions must be transparently derived and formed so as to be compelling evidence that the proposed ‘changes’ are required (and give overall better cost/ benefits)
	Monitoring decisions are often complete and are developed

Peter Costigan	over several years involving different organisations- decisions often have a large number of dependencies- Applying a single process will be a challenge
Robert Lowson	There's a danger that focusing on how to make major funding decisions might divert attention from the areas where collaborations would bring benefits
Lawrence Way	The process is too linear (see PC comment). The real issue is gaining insight into the questions being asked and opportunity to answer them differently- mainly the connection to the interests of others. A process that is 'expertly' facilitated provides advice, can penetrate science and obligations and gains intelligence
Keith Porter	Common sense is defeated by organisational posturing! Need to focus on cost savings and benefits. Decisions are taken by organisations re: monitoring - Not a remote 'board'. Steering group – steers & project team facilitates
Richard Walmsley	Significant issues over funding streams for monitoring programmes and political sensitivities
Gill Ryall	How to agree on criteria. How EOF/ Decision Framework will really influence funding streams and priorities, especially when the real problem is lack of overall funding
Alice Bunn	If UK-EOF is about providing recommendations, how to ensure those recommendations, carry weight
Bruce Truscott	Given the need to balance an investment recommendation with an equivalent saving (no more money) how o we ensure we have sufficient knowledge of the total system to identify saving opportunities