

UK- Environmental Observation Framework

8th Management Group Teleconference

31st August 2012, 10.00-12.00

Minutes

Main Meeting Aims:

- Discuss and agree messages for the Sir John Beddington meeting (19th Sept);
- Discuss UK-EOF staffing resource.

Attendees:

Michael Schultz	NERC (Chair)	Helen Beadman	UK-EOF
Andrea Turner	UK-EOF (notes)	Keith Porter	NE
Andy Nesbitt	EA	Lawrence Way	JNCC
Beth Greenway	UKSA	Liz Tucker	Defra
Caryn Le Roux	WG	Richard Howe	FC
Cathy Johnson	DECC		
Elizabeth Seaman	UKSA		

Apologies:

Amanda Charles	GO Science	Ian Davidson	EEA
Amber Vater	UK-EOF	Joanna Drewitt	SG
Andrew Watkinson	LWEC	Mary Barkham	LWEC
Bruce Truscott	Met Office	Nathan Critchlow-Watton	SEPA
David Allen	CCW	Peter Stephenson	ESRC
Doug Wilson	EA	Richard Walmsley	EA
Gwyn Rees	NERC CEH	Shaun Russell	WERH

Welcome & introductions

Members were welcomed by the Chair (Lawrence Way standing in for Doug Wilson), and apologies accepted. It was agreed to focus on the John Beddington Sustainable Finance Committee papers (Papers B, C and D), with any remaining time on Management Group Matters (Paper F).

Minutes and actions of the 16th MGM (Paper A)

The Minutes and actions of the 16th MGM were accepted as accurate, and approved by the group. The completion date for Action 7 has been moved to mid-September, and for Action 6 to mid-late September.

Sir John Beddington Sustainable Finance Committee Assessment progress (Paper B)

Helen Beadman summarised Paper B and emphasised that this is not a definitive priority or 'core' list, but an attempt to enable a qualitative understanding of what and where the vulnerabilities and criticalities are in environmental observations. She reiterated that the MG was being asked to: i) discuss the outcomes of the assessment and analysis, and ii) provide guidance on how best to present the results to the Sir John Beddington committee.

The following points were discussed:

- The MG is happy with the analysis done on these data;

- The background, interpretation and implications of the UK-EOF critical list need to be absolutely clear within the meeting papers, to avoid mis-use of the list;
- The current critical list is too long for the committee to usefully work with, and as a next step could be reduced using better defined criteria. For the purposes of this committee it could also be restricted to just multiple funded programmes and programmes with multiple beneficiaries but sole funder;
- The order within Annex B1 reflects one particular way of organising the data, rather than any priority ranking. As Annex B1 is illustrative of the scale and range of observations at risk, it might be best to remove it from the final papers;
- Classifying observations by type would be useful, particularly as the critical list (and catalogue) contain observing programmes but also other types of things eg: infrastructure/platforms, mechanisms that store and make observational data accessible. The coverage of infrastructure/platforms is very partial, and needs resolution;
- Number of years of confirmed funding is not always an accurate representation of vulnerability, as many organisations only confirm funding for the duration of the CSR period. Within an organisation, there is however an understanding of which are the priority (safe) funding areas, and which are at risk. If UK-EOF can access this information we will have a more useful handle on future vulnerability;
- Clearer definitions of criticality and vulnerability would be useful, and clearer information about the risks to programmes with single funder but multiple users.

ACTION 1: HB to use input from MG discussion when drafting final papers for Sir John Beddington meeting on 19th September.

Case studies progress (Paper C)

The role of the case studies as an Annex to the Sir John Beddington committee papers was discussed, and each case study looked at briefly.

It was agreed that:

- the role of the case studies was as a 'test set', to illustrate the breadth and variety of areas covered by the UK-EOF catalogue – not as special cases that deserved priority funding;
- a short table illustrating the key characteristics of each case study would be useful, to demonstrate why this range was chosen;
- case studies could include additional information on alternatives to the current programme (eg crucial, or could merge with another?), strategic/legislative importance, and what critical need they fulfil;
- HB was given authority to edit all the case studies (currently quite disparate in content, length and style), to present a more coherent Annex;
- MG members were asked to send any further comments about the case studies, particularly why they are critical, how they are vulnerable, and obvious weaknesses, to HB by Friday 7th September;
- the Management Group would like to see the overall presentation of the case studies (ie: the cover note, table etc) before they go to Sir John's Committee;
- Case studies should be introduced by the same person at the meeting, to provide coherence and avoid any apparent bias from any organisation. Key issues should be provided in a short cover paper.

ACTION 2: HB to compile a short table illustrating characteristics of each case study.

ACTION 3: All case study authors to send HB a single sentence describing the critical need for that programme, and who it fits into the landscape. Deadline: Friday 7th September.

ACTION 4: All MG to send any further comments about the case studies, particularly weaknesses, to HB. Deadline: Friday 7th September.

Terms of Reference (Paper D)

The MG was happy with the proposed Terms of Reference, adding only the suggestion that a sentence on stating Conflict of Interest would be useful. It was agreed that the MG would reflect on the success of the 19th September meeting at the next MG meeting (8th November).

UK-EOF Projects: Plans and Priorities (Paper E)

Deferred until next MGM (November).

Management Group matters (Paper F)

At the recent NERC/Defra bilateral meeting it was agreed to commission an independent review of UK-EOF. This will commence in October, and report back by March 2013. The MGM understood and welcomed the review as a positive exercise that will help inform their own future funding/relationships with UK EOF. It was agreed that MB members are welcome to input into the process, and will be invited to participate once timescales are finalised.

ACTION 5: HB to invite MG input into UK-EOF review, once timescales are finalised.

UK-EOF staffing

One full-time post is available within the secretariat, and HB is looking at options to fill this position. Each MG member was asked how likely it was for a member of their organisation to be available to take this up as a secondment. Honest responses suggested that this really wasn't an option for any of the organisations around the table. HB therefore needs to explore other avenues to fill this post.

ACTION 6: HB to follow up options for one FTE post within UK-EOF secretariat.

Diary dates:

- 17th Management Group Meeting – 8th November (Edinburgh)
- 9th MG Teleconference w/c 14th January 2012

ACTION		OWNER	DEADLINE
1	HB to use input from MG discussion when drafting final papers for Sir John Beddington meeting on 19 th September.	HB	Friday 7 th September
2	HB to compile a short table illustrating characteristics of each case study.	HB	September
3	All case study authors to send HB a single sentence describing the critical need for that programme, and who it fits into the landscape.		Friday 7 th September.
4	All MG to send any further comments about the case studies, particularly weaknesses, to	All	Friday 7 th September

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	HB.		
5	HB to invite MG input into UK-EOF review, once timescales are finalised.	HB	October
6	HB to follow up options for one FTE post within UK-EOF secretariat.	HB	September