

WBP EVIDENCE GAPS MEETING, ABERYSTWYTH 15 MARCH 2013

Purpose: Follow-up meeting arising from the 'Wales Biodiversity Partnership Academics Workshop'-Sept 2011'. The meeting gathered together a small number of those involved with research work in Wales and beyond, to consider how we may address the questions provided below.

Attendees:

Tracey Lovering (WBP) (Chair/Facilitator)
Shaun Russell, Wales Environment Research Hub, Bangor
Mike Bruford (Cardiff University)
Catherine Duigan (CCW)
Geoff Proffitt (tbc) (Swansea University)
Dai Harris (Welsh Government) (by phone for first hour)
Kiriaki Remoundou (Aberystwyth University)

Apologies:

Pippa Moore (Aberystwyth University)
Chris Lea (WG)
Peter Dennis (Aberystwyth University)
Natasha De Vere (National Botanic Garden Wales)
Mike Christie (Aberystwyth University)

QUESTIONS RAISED AND SUGGESTED ANSWERS? DISCUSSION POINTS & RESULTING ACTIONS (Detailed in table below)

1. How do we best address the 'priority' biodiversity & ecosystem approach evidence gaps in Wales? (as provided by WBP Ecosystem Groups Dec 2012)

Agreed that Higher Education Institutes are in a position to coordinate larger research projects e.g at a regional or Wales-wide level. Possible to produce synergistically collaborative work. The scale of each question needs further work to differentiate between large scale research projects and those that could be broken down further into smaller projects. Some marine questions are currently huge in scale. Long term data-sets become possible, through systematic delivery of linked pieces of work.

Some exciting research questions are being asked among the list of evidence gaps. Literature reviews can answer many of the questions posed by the evidence gaps. This kind of study is often what is desired by final year students.

Mapping evidence gap questions to 2020

ACTIONS 1-7; 10-13; 26

Comment [t1]: Can someone expand on this please?

2. What collaboration exists already between research departments in Wales/outside of Wales? Are there opportunities to extend collaborations? Bring in new Groups/sectors? Could such collaborations address larger research projects, those requiring multiple study sites or long-term projects?

Most collaborations existing across higher education institutions are ad-hoc. The St David's Day Group was conceived as a vehicle for Welsh institutional collaboration including research. All Vice-chancellors are signed up. If this project REF impact AND Welsh Government supported then will attract their interest.

¹*There are numerous collaborations between CCW and Universities in Wales..(Paul provides listed examples). There may be collaborations in relation to marine policy (renewables, industry, impacts, etc) that I am unaware of. There is a certain over-head associated with student projects, particularly where funding conditions require CCW involvement as an 'industrial partner'. These projects do not come for free! Development of larger projects may be with research establishments or through funding other organisations. There is no particular benefit to spending money with academic institutes, over others and quite often, there is a compromise between what the researchers key study areas are and the questions that CCW wish to answer.'*

ACTIONS 6-9, 15-18, 26

3. How do we best communicate this area of work across Welsh institutions? How do we encourage research departments to consult the on-line suite of WBP Research Project proposals when planning research projects, and engage directly with project leads? Discuss project proposals submitted to date from WBP Partners.

²*As with most operations, the institutions will 'follow the money', so if they see the benefit of increasing capacity in their departments, then this will be a good incentive. Aligning hot research topics with Biodiversity evidence gaps will bring buy in. Some dedicated strong guidance, coordination and motivation will maintain the links necessary, year on year.*

ACTIONS 1, 15-20, 22-23, 25-26

4. What funding opportunities are there for research in Wales? (Shaun Russell is completing work on this and can bring this to the mtg)

Funding: We will look at the range of funding opportunities but should also remember that a resource is attached to each student (students pay up to 9K/yr). MRes Students have 2K allocated to them. Horizon 2020 operates from 2014, looking at societal challenges – aquaculture, fisheries, other ecosystem services. 71 billion included within this project. Welsh Environment Research money – investigate further. Welsh Infrastructure – mitigation money, not just for action but for evidence gathering. Ecological footprint of business and industry – opportunities here? The impact of industry and development is not well understood – literature reviews may inform some of the gaps relating to ecosystem functioning.

Upcoming REF (Research Excellence Framework), which assesses national research outputs. Impact statement produced. Link between a number of papers produced that led to research which led to physical output.

Comment [t2]: Can someone re-write this for me please/

¹ In response to circulating the questions to Ecosystem Group Chairs prior to this meeting, Paul Brazier, Marine Ecosystem Group Chair, provided comments.

² PB's comment

³Multi- national funding, EFF, small business....

ACTIONS 1, 18, 21, 26

5. How can we link with research gap initiatives elsewhere in UK and outside UK?

This project could provide a model for other countries.

Climate Change Consortium considered very successful. Worth engaging with C3W, although more Earth/Environmental Science based. Contact: Clive Walmsley

New partners exist outside Wales e.g. through groups Mike is involved with; we will all contribute to increasing links between this project and others once Project webpage available.

⁴*Engaging with researchers in their world – conferences, symposia, presentations.*

ACTIONS 9, 14, 25-26

6. Are you able to support WBP in producing a Register of biodiversity research gaps in Wales?

Yes (unanimous)

ACTION 1

7. Additional question asked by Catherine, as to why institutions are interested in working with WBP to address biodiversity evidence gaps; what incentives are there for them?

The response was that 'it was the right thing to do'; if we don't engage together to resolve the evidence gaps, then who will? There is an 'intelligensis' of young people wanting to get into biodiversity research, with thousands in Environmental Sciences every year coming into final MSc/PhD. This project provides research projects that are needed by industry⁵ and policy makers with opportunities for students to work with industry. Employability is increased if student has practical engagement with agencies/industry.

ACTIONS ARISING 15 MARCH 2013

Action	Lead	Input provided by	Agreed Completion Date ⁶ 2013
1. Produce WBP Biodiversity Evidence Gaps Register for Wales	Tracey Lovering	Shaun Russell Geoff Proffitt All ⁷	End July?
2. The scale of each question needs further work from Ecosystem	Tracey Lovering/WBP	WBP Ecosystem Group	End May?

Comment [t3]: Please provide suggestions!

³ PB's comment

⁴ PB's comment

⁵ Industry refers here to the environmental sector, local and national government and commercial businesses

⁶ Dates are suggested, please amend as necessary

⁷ All of above group to feed in comments

Groups/Species Expert Groups/INNS ⁸	Group Chairs	Chairs/Species Expert Groups/INNS	
3. Prioritisation work required on big questions being asked, to inform institutions how to approach these and time needed to invest.	Tracey Lovering	Ecosystem Groups/Species Expert Groups/INNS Mike Bruford	End May?
4. REF – Prepare a coordinated message/ impact statement required	Mike Bruford		July
5. Research Project Proposals – work with those submitting RPPs to provide student placement opportunities following research work to ensure data user-friendly.	Tracey Lovering	Ecosystem Groups/Species Expert Groups/INNS	End July
6. Provide a workshop following REF end of cycle to look forward at opportunities available	Tracey Lovering/Mike Bruford/Geoff Proffitt	?	?
7. Provide details of Community Environmental Research WERH 1 day workshop/NERC Knowledge Exchange	Shaun Russell	-	End April?
8. Circulate list of WBP Academics (TL). Identify any obvious gaps (All)	Tracey Lovering	All	End April
9. Develop ToR for WBP Academics. Tracey to provide to SR & MB original WBP SG Paper re. WBP Academics	Shaun Russell, Mike Bruford/Geoff Proffitt	All Tracey	End May End April
10. Which cluster of questions are best thought out? (ref. Prof William J Sutherland) Hold workshop and produce a research paper.	Mike Bruford?	All	End June?
11. Circulate advice on how to formulate a research question. Provide advice to Ecosystem Groups/Species Expert Groups/INNS & LBAPs	Shaun Russell Tracey Lovering	-	End April?
12. Mike to go through those evidence gaps he has greatest knowledge on, and provide further comments.	Mike Bruford	-	Mid May?
13. Tie in specific evidence gaps with CBD targets where possible.	Tracey Lovering	All	End May
14. Share feedback on EA evidence gaps document	Shaun Russell	-	End April
15. Geoff to raise Evidence Gaps	Geoff Proffitt	-	Mid May?

Comment [t4]: In 6 mths preparation for the next REF submissions will begin; however, perhaps best to prepare well in advance?

⁸ The large Marine gaps will be worked into meaningful research areas after April 2013 by NRW staff; current 'priority' gaps will form the basis of many (smaller) evidence gaps, which will be prioritised themselves.

Project with Prof Ian Cluckie (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Swansea University) with ref to St. David's Day Group			
16. Shaun to raise Evidence Gaps Project with Prof David Shepherd (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Bangor University) with ref to St. David's Day Group	Shaun Russell	-	Mid May
17. Tracey to ask Clive Walmsley to highlight Evidence Gaps Project with C3W.	Tracey Lovering	-	Mid May
18. Sêr Cymru Programme - Low carbon, energy and environment (1 of 3 Grand Challenge area) – communicate Evidence Gaps Project engage with	Mike Bruford	Possible links: Mike Christie, Wayne Powell (Aber); Emma Hayhurst (Glam); Colin Jago (Bangor)	End June?
19. Geoff to bring Natasha De Vere up to speed re. Evidence Gaps meeting discussions, outcomes & actions.	Geoff Proffitt	-	End April
20. Catherine to communicate Evidence Gaps Project to Ceri Davies, NRW when opportunity arises (once NRW dust settles!)	Catherine Duigan	-	End June?
21. Identify potential projects that may be met by a LIFE, HLF Bid, or other large funding pot	All	WBP Groups	End June?
22. Provide a poster for European Association of Environmental and Resource Economists Conference	Tracey Lovering	Kiriaki Remoundou	End May?
23. Consider additional conferences where Evidence Gaps Project poster could be displayed	All	WBP Groups	End May
24. WERH funding page/paper to be updated and link circulated once new Communications Officer in post	Shaun Russell	-	End May?
25. Tracey to communicate Evidence Gaps Project with FC, EA research leads now in NRW and also with staff working with Industry and Business in NRW.	Tracey Lovering	Catherine Duigan	End May
26. Tracey to provide material for WBP Evidence Gaps Project webpage to be held on WBP website. Circulate draft information to all to ensure no obvious gaps. Page will provide Project outline, workshop outcomes, full list of evidence gaps,	Tracey Lovering	All	End April

Comment [t5]: Kiriaki, is this too late?

WBP Academic contact details, all RPPs ⁹ and links.			
--	--	--	--

⁹ WBP Research Project Proposals