

**Report of the
Working Group for Increased Cooperation Among UNESCO Intergovernmental/International
Scientific Programmes in the UK
To the Natural Sciences Committee**

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Period under report: April 2007-July 2008

1. Background

- 1.1. Of the 6 UNESCO Intergovernmental/International Scientific Programmes (ISPs) - International Geoscience Programme (IGCP); International Hydrological Programme (IHP); Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC); Man and the Biosphere (MAB); International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP); and Management of Social Transformations (MOST) - the UK is active in IGCP, IHP, IOC and MAB, each with its own UK National Committee.
- 1.2. The ISP National Committees are a very important structuring element. They ensure the presence of the ISPs on a national level and promote awareness of ISP activities within Government, governmental agencies and among researchers.
- 1.3. The UK currently has membership (to October 2009) in the following UNESCO Intergovernmental Councils: Intergovernmental Council of IHP; International Coordinating Council of the MAB Programme; and the IOC Executive Council.
- 1.4. At the beginning of 2006 a workshop was held in Berlin, convened by UNESCO's Sector for External Relations and the German Commission for UNESCO, entitled "Strengthening Cooperation between National Commissions for UNESCO and ISPs" (attended by members of the UK National Commission for UNESCO). The workshop identified ways in which the impact and visibility of ISP activities at all levels (national, regional, global and inter-regional) can and must be improved, including the recommendation to promote collaboration among ISP National Committees.
- 1.5. The recent Overall Review of UNESCO's Science Programme recognised the need to improve coordination and synergy among the ISPs and underscored the advantages of closer cooperation between UNESCO National Commissions and the National Committees for the ISPs (*Recommendation 5*).

2. Remit of the Working Group for Increased Cooperation Among UNESCO Intergovernmental /International Scientific Programmes in the UK

- 2.1 The remit of the Working Group for Increased Cooperation Among UNESCO Intergovernmental /International Scientific Programmes in the UK is to assist the Natural Sciences Committee in fulfilling its responsibilities in respect to UNESCO's ISPs, specifically to help to adopt and implement a more holistic approach to the ISPs in the UK.
- 2.2 To this end, the Working Group's objectives are : *to provide a forum for and facilitate discussion and action on areas of common interest between UK ISP National Committees through their respective Chairs, including exploiting opportunities for synergy in order to increase the impact and visibility of ISP programmes in the UK ; to increase cooperation and coordination amongst the ISP UK National Committees through their respective Chairs as well as interaction with the UK National Commission and its Committees and UNESCO ; and to provide coordinated inputs on relevant policy issues to the UK National Commission, UNESCO and UK Government.*

2.3 The Working Group's mandate and objectives are laid out in its Terms of Reference, which were adopted by the Natural Sciences Committee on 31 January 2007, and refined by the Working Group after its first meeting, with the revisions approved by the Natural Sciences Committee on 10 September 2007.

3. Meetings and Attendance

- 3.1. The Working Group has now held four meetings (12th April 2007, 26th July 2007, 29th October 2007, 19th March 2008). In addition, all the members of the Group participated in a joint Defra-UNESCO one-day collaboration workshop on 20th March 2007, which was organised by Defra and UNESCO, Paris (as part of the UK-supported UK-UNESCO Cooperation in Science project) to raise awareness of R&D activities.
- 3.2. Working Group meetings are chaired by Trevor Guymer (Chair of the UK IOC National Committee), facilitated by the UK National Commission's Programme Secretary for Natural Sciences (Natasha Bevan).
- 3.3. Attendance at meetings has been very high over the past year, with full (or near full) attendance at every meeting.
- 3.4. There has been no revision or addition to the membership since the Working Group was established.
- 3.5. The Working Group has reviewed the frequency of its meetings (after a full year's business) and has agreed that the current frequency of 3 meetings per calendar year meets its business needs. The Group also corresponds electronically by email in between meetings.

4. Activity

- 4.1. Information exchange
 - Regular update from the 4 ISP's given at each meeting.
 - UK National Committee Meeting minutes for each ISP circulated to Working Group members highlighting key items of interest, priorities and targets.
- 4.2. Communication
 - The Working Group has begun to produce a series of regular UK ISP newsletters. The first two newsletters were produced in November 2007 and July 2008, and were circulated to the relevant Working Groups and committees of the UK National Commission for UNESCO, to the Secretariats of the ISP's in Paris and to all members of the UK ISP National Committees.
 - First Working Group annual report has been produced.
- 4.3. Government interactions
 - Information collated on ISP interaction with government departments (including nature/type, strength and frequency of interaction) – serving as a living document. This has been used to help identify where energy could be channelled to strengthen links. DfID and Defra have been initially identified as priority departments that could benefit from improved relations.
- 4.4. ISP Synergy Pilot project
 - Collaborations between the UK ISPs nationally and internationally have been considered with a focus around data exchange.
 - Draft outline for a pilot collaborative project focused around coastal ecosystems has been produced. Focus is on comparative studies in Africa (presently East Africa) and parts of UK.
 - Focused application submitted to ESPA (NERC; DFID; ESRC) scheme outlining project proposal on impact of climate and land-use changes on coastal ecosystems. Geographical focus is Malindi area of Kenya, the Pemba Channel area of Tanzania and the Seychelles. Outline proposal submission successful (invited to submit full proposal); awaiting decision on full proposal submission (decision expected autumn 2008).
- 4.5. Climate Change
 - Identified as a clear issue for a coordinated ISP input to research and policy questions.
 - A watching brief has been established on UNESCO's intersectoral action on climate change.

5. Networking and Engaging Others

- 5.1 The ISP Chairs each report on the Working Group/UK National Commission for UNESCO to their respective ISP National Committee to disseminate information and to advise of priorities and activities of relevance.
- 5.2 UK ISP Chairs have put a standing item on their National Committee meetings agenda to do so.
- 5.3 Working Group membership was reviewed in February; a decision was made to keep this as it is, but to identify and engage 'advisers' to specific areas of work (such as ISP synergy pilot project). This will provide additional expertise and input (and resource), and widen network/reach to engage other researchers.
- 5.4 Dr Val Byfield (NOCS) was engaged (provided for by UK IOC) to work on developing the ISP synergy pilot project proposal in both a general sense and with a more focused application to the ESPA scheme which, if successful, would provide some limited funding for network support, workshops and training.
- 5.5 Each UK ISP Chair has highlighted the work and activity of the Working Group/National Commission for UNESCO with their respective Programme Secretariat at UNESCO HQ in Paris.

6. Future Work Plan

A work plan outlining the Group's proposed work programme for the next year is being devised.

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Working Group Membership



CHAIR: Mr Trevor Guymer
Chair, UK IOC National Committee
Member, Natural Sciences Committee



Mr Andy Bell
Chair, UK MAB National Committee
Member, Natural Sciences Committee



Professor Alan Jenkins
Chair, UK IHP National Committee
Member, Natural Sciences Committee



Professor Edward Derbyshire
Chair, UK IGCP National Committee
Member, Natural Sciences Committee



Professor Alec Boksenberg
Chair, Natural Sciences Committee
and Chair, UK National Commission for UNESCO



Professor Ernest Shannon
Vice Chair, Natural Sciences Committee