

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

31 March 2010

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Period under report: 1 July 2008 – 31 March 2010 (20 months)

1. Background

- 1.1. Of the six 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. They also coordinate UK inputs to the relevant ISP governing bodies.
- 1.3. As of March 2010, the UK currently has membership on the IOC Executive Council. Until October 2009, when it completed its two terms, the UK also had membership on the Intergovernmental Council of IHP and the International Coordinating Council of the MAB Programme.
- 1.4. The Overall Review of UNESCO's Science Programme (undertaken 2006-2007) 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 (*Overall Review 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 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 Sciences Committee on 31 January 2007, and refined by the Working Group after its first meeting, with the revisions approved by the Sciences Committee on 10 September 2007.

3. Meetings and Attendance

- 3.1. The Working Group held four meetings during the 20-month period covered by this report (4 July 2008, 18 December 2008, 26 March 2009 and 16 November 2009).
- 3.2. Working Group meetings were chaired by Trevor Guymmer (Chair of the UK IOC National Committee) until end March 2009 and by Andy Bell (Chair of the UK MAB National Committee) on 16 November 2009. It has been agreed that future meetings will be chaired on a rotating basis. All meetings were facilitated by the UK National Commission's Programme Secretary for 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. Val Byfield (NOCS) has attended meetings since 26th March 2009 in relation to the ISP Synergy Pilot project. Ernest Shannon (Vice Chair of UKNC Sciences Committee) resigned from the Working Group (and the Sciences Committee) on 9 February 2010.
- 3.5. The Working Group has reviewed the frequency of its meetings and has agreed that the current frequency of normally three meetings per calendar year meets its business needs. The Group also corresponds electronically by email in between meetings.

4. Activity

Activity during the period under report focused on developing and delivering on a Group work plan for January 2009 – March 2010:

- 4.1. Information exchange
 - Regular update from the four ISP's given at each meeting and room on each agenda for sharing, feedback and discourse on key ISP activities, priorities and issues.
 - Electronic exchange of information and discussion which is mutually relevant in-between meetings.
- 4.2. Communication
 - The Working Group continues to produce a regular UK ISP E-bulletin in February and August of each year. The electronic bulletin is part of the Group's work to improve the communication about, and visibility of, the ISPs within the UK. It includes updates on activity for each ISP (relevant to the UK) as well as on joint ISP initiatives. The bulletin's distribution list increased three-fold during the period under report to about 400 individuals; these include individuals involved with or interested in the ISPs from a UK perspective.
 - Second Working Group activity report has been produced.
- 4.3. Government and Research Institution/University interactions
 - Information collated on ISP interaction with government departments in 2008 and 2009 (including nature/type, strength and frequency of interaction) – serving as a living document, this information builds upon and is compared to the first set of information collected in 2007. This has been used to help identify where energy could be channelled to strengthen links. The Cabinet Office (Civil Contingencies Secretariat), DFID, Defra and DECC have been identified as priority departments that could benefit from improved relations.
 - Cross-catalogued those UK institutions (in particular universities and research institutes) - and individuals therein - which interact with the UNESCO ISPs (for example as part of a particular programme or project). Information was gathered from the UNESCO Secretariat and analysed by the UK National Commission for UNESCO Secretariat in August and September 2009. A disaggregated statistical report was produced and summary results identified 93 different UK institutions and 279 individuals who are currently or recently involved in the ISP across a range of programmes and projects. The activity has contributed to a better understanding of the scope and scale of UK interaction with the four Programmes
- 4.4. Policy Briefings
 - The Working Group provides expert analysis, comment and advice to UKNC, UNESCO and HMG on key policy issues. This may take a variety of forms including written and oral briefings, inputs to reviews, and responses to consultations. During the period under report, the Working Group has provided input to the UK National Commission for UNESCO and HMG for the following:
 - Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Select Committee's supplementary call for evidence as part of its inquiry 'Putting science and engineering at the heart of government policy' (April 2009);

- DFID White Paper Consultation “Eliminating World Poverty: Assuring our Common Future” (May 2009);
- 180th, 181st & 182nd UNESCO Executive Boards (Sept.-Oct. 2008, April 2009 & Sept. 2009);
- 35th UNESCO General Conference (Oct. 2009);
- Chair of UK National Commission for UNESCO’s series of discussions with UNESCO D-G on UNESCO Sciences Programmes (Oct. 2009-Jan. 2010).

4.5. ISP Synergy Pilot project

- Collaborations between the UK ISPs nationally and internationally have been considered. Africa: with a focus on engaging in research and capacity building directed at coastal management and poverty alleviation. UK: with a focus on engaging in research directed at marine and river basin interaction
- Scoping documents have been produced for projects focused around coastal ecosystems in the UK and East Africa.
- Focused application submitted to ESPA (NERC; DFID; ESRC) call (March 2009) outlining project proposal on climate and economic development impacts on coastal ecosystem services in East Africa. Geographical focus is the coasts and islands of Kenya and Tanzania. Awaiting decision (expected summer 2010).

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 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 March 2009 call which, if successful, would provide some limited funding for a partnership and programme development workshop. The ESPA proposal listed nine partner organisations, widening the network/reach and engaging other researchers.

5.4 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 plan outlining the Group’s proposed work programme for the FY2010-11 is being devised.

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Working Group Membership



Mr Trevor Guymer
Chair, UK IOC National
Committee
Member, Sciences Committee



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



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



Professor Alec Boksenberg
Chair, Sciences Committee



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



Professor Ernest Shannon
(until 9 February 2010)
Vice Chair, Natural Sciences
Committee



Dr Valborg Byfield
(from March 2009)
NOCS