

DPLUS116 Falkland Wetlands PMG meeting
Skype
13 July 2021

Attendees: Al Baylis (AB) (SAERI), Denise Blake (DB) (FIG), Steffi Carter (SC) (SAERI), Roger Flower (RF) (Independent & UCL), David Stroud (DS) (Independent), Julian Thompson (JT) (UCL)

Apologies: Chris Evans (CE) (UK CEH), Tara Pelembe (TP) (SAERI)

Minute taker: Steffi Carter

A separate 1-1 catch-up meeting between SC and CE took place on 16 July 2021. SC summarised what was discussed on 13 July and provided CE with the opportunity to add further comments; these are added to the meeting notes in italics.

AGENDA

1. Project Time Line & Project Log Frame

The current project timeline will conclude the project in March 2022. AB & SC are exploring the option of a no-cost project extension, which is currently discussed within SAERI. Depending on a possible project extension, some of the deliverables in the project log frame would be postponed to a later date.

The remaining outputs from the project log frame were discussed and the PMG agreed that the following indicators will be completed automatically as the project goes along:

- Indicator 1.1 / Activity 1.1: regular PMG meetings
- Indicator 3.2: Addressing gaps in basic water quality data
- Indicator 3.5 / Activity 3.2 & Activity 3.3: 2nd fieldwork season & report
- Indicator 3.6 / Activity 3.5: update of database and webGIS, including logger data
- Indicator 4.5: Final project stakeholder talk

The following indicators were discussed in more detail:

- Indicator 3.4 / Activity 3.4: Symposium
- Indicators 4.1 & 4.2 / Activities 4.1 & 4.2: Indicator selection and monitoring protocol
- Indicator 4.3 / Activities 4.3 & 4.4: Staff training on indicator monitoring & training report
- Indicator 4.4 / Activity 4.5: Recommendations for a Wetlands Action Plan

SC will require considerable input from the PMG in order to achieve these indicators. Selected indicators will need to be able to detect environmental change from baseline 'wetland condition' and will probably consist of a combination of variables from hydrology, chemistry and biology. Environmental change can both be caused by climate change and land use change; any changes cannot necessarily be attributed to one or the other.

The lack of wetlands bird population status and trends was discussed and it was suggested that recommendations for a Wetlands Action Plan could include particular bird monitoring sites.

2. Project Exit Strategy

The feedback from the Annual Report 2021 asked for clarification on the project's exit strategy and for it to be communicated in the Half Annual Report in October 2021. The PMG agreed that the exit strategy can be summarised as follows:

- Recommendations for a Wetlands Action Plan to the Falkland Islands Government (FIG) to enable FIG to manage wetlands beyond the project, including outreach / public awareness events
- Long-term monitoring of environmental change through
 - o Set-up of equipment
 - o Preparation of a monitoring protocol to include hydrology, chemistry and biota
 - o Training of staff so that monitoring beyond the project can take place
- Recommendations for follow-on projects, e.g. future investigations to tackle issues that arose during the project

CE added the need to urge FIG for a commitment to carry on with the monitoring, so that long-term monitoring data from the Falklands will actually be generated.

3. Fieldwork Plans

International travel and quarantine requirements are still highly uncertain, therefore distinct travel planning for project partners is further postponed until the next PMG meeting in October 2022. It is likely that project partner visits will happen between Jan – March 2022 rather than at the end of 2021, although RF suggests that a visit between late November and mid December might be possible.

CE has earmarked January 2022 for a trip to the Falklands, although this still depends on the international travel situation.

4. eDNA

SC updated the PMG that the eDNA work will go ahead shortly. The additional funding secured will allow the inclusion of five waterbodies into the study scope. It was decided to focus on four ponds and one river (Murrell River), although in a subsequent email exchange between RF and SC, the Malo River was favoured because it is also the site for one of the long-term logger stations. SC will collect the samples in July, will take them to the UK in August to Swansea University, where the lab work will be carried out.

5. Stakeholder engagement

SC updates the group on stakeholder engagement. Farmer's Week took place from 4 to 9 July 2021, which included a general public exhibition, at which SAERI had a stall and SC discussed the Wetlands Project and displayed freshwater invertebrates for visitors. This was followed by a week of talks, including a talk by SC about the Wetlands Projects, followed by a workshop-style discussion on ditching practices. As it turns out ditching is very much part of current day land management to eliminate hazards for livestock. Best ditching techniques have not been trialled and it appears that the overall approach is excavation, with possibly negative environmental

impacts. SC will follow this up with the Department of Agriculture. A small-scale experiment to address this might be useful, although this could not be completed within the project life time.

6. Other matters

SC will collate all logger data – raw and corrected on the Google drive and will send an email when she has had a chance to update the drive with the data.

JT asked SC on her downloading schedule of logger data. This will depend on logger battery life but the next round of downloading data will probably take place in September or October 2021.

JT received an email from the UCL contract department regarding the project year 1 contract, which will hopefully be finalised soon.