

RCP (09) 4th Meeting

ROYAL COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION

Minutes of a meeting held from 2nd to 3rd April 2009 at 55 Whitehall, London

Chair

Sir John Lawton

Members

Professor Peter Liss
Professor Michael Depledge
Dr Ian Graham-Bryce
Professor Peter Matthews

Professor Gordon MacKerron
Professor Judith Petts
Professor Michael Roberts

Secretariat

Tom Eddy
Jon Freeman
Rachael Yokoo-Laurence
Philine (Line) zu Ermgassen

Laura Pleasants
Yolanda Rizzi
Debbie Putt

Attached to the Secretariat from the Scottish Government

Madeleine Cusack

A list of all ACTIONS agreed at this meeting is at **Annex 1**.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Item 1: Preliminary business

1. Apologies were received from *Professor Cumpsty, Professor Lee, Professor Scott, Professor Jowell, Professor Rayner, and Professor Warren* for the duration of the meeting, and from *Professor Mackerron*, for Thursday only. *The Chairman* welcomed *Susan Mumby* to the Secretariat as the new Office Manager and notified Members that *Madeleine Cusack* would be attending meetings when possible and would be working with the Commission on loan from the Scottish Government for one day a week for 3 months. *The Chairman* also noted that it was *Debbie Putt's* and *Line zu Ermgassen's* last meeting.
2. *The Chairman* drew Member's attention to two tabled papers – a biography for Mr Philip Fletcher (OFWAT) and written answers to oral evidence questions from COSLA. *The Chairman* noted in a change to the agenda that the Audit Commission would not be attending the meeting this month, but next month.

3. *Yolanda Rizzi* updated Members on the response received so far following the call for information for the Demographic Change study. The choice of topic for the next study had been warmly welcomed and a number of organisations had already signalled their wish to contribute.

Item 2: RCP(09)3rd: Draft minutes of the March 2009 meeting

4. Amendments to the minutes were suggested by Members and incorporated by the Secretariat.

Item 3: RCP(09)4th: Research Councils' response to the Novel Materials Report

5. Members noted this letter and *The Chairman* was keen that *Professor Depledge* keep an eye on developments in the US. Members expressed concern that some of the fundamental research gaps (as outlined in the Novel Materials report) were still not being adequately prioritised or addressed. *The Secretary* reported that Professor Holgate was Advisor to the House of Lords Select Committee on the investigation into nanomaterials in food.

ADAPTATION STUDY

Item 4: RCP(09)247: Project Status report

6. *The Chairman* reported that the timescale was looking difficult. Members agreed that publication in late November was more likely and this would mean signing off the report at the beginning of September. The Commission had a discussion regarding the timeliness of the report and who might be influenced by its publication. The Commission noted the need to engage again with Lord Hunt and with Gordon Conway of DfID. Action points:
 - Secretariat to organise a meeting with Lord Hunt
 - Secretariat to organise a meeting between the Chairman and Gordon Conway.

Item 5: RCP(09)223: London Climate Change Partnership – Living with a Changing Climate

7. *Philine zu Ermgassen* introduced this paper. She commented that the council representatives had said that the barriers to climate change adaptation included the attitudes of people to adaptation, funding structures, and the role of legislation, in that any legislation for adaptation should not be prescriptive but should allow for locally innovative approaches to adaptation.

Item 6: RCP(09)243: The Pitt review and the Government Response

8. Members discussed the communication of information on risk in relation to the information in this report. Members concluded it is not

enough to communicate the likelihood of an extreme event occurring in numerical terms; expressing the risk in terms of what it means for people using a narrative is the crucial element.

Item 7: RCP(09)236: Defra water strategy 'Future Water'

9. Members noted that throughout the paper, the use of 'we' as a way of describing who will take action on water resource issues is aspirational, and does not describe who specifically will take action. Members noted the point in the strategy about the promotion of UKCP09 as a publically available interactive resource. Members also discussed whether it could be possible to set a minimum standard that people should be working to adapt to and then derive local adaptation strategies from that figure. Members also discussed whether it would be possible to attribute an extreme weather event unambiguously to climate change, and the need to build capacity to cope with the current climate.

Item 8: RCP(09)244: The Economic Regulation of the Water Industry

10. Members noted this paper.

Item 9: RCP(09)241: Preparation for Oral Evidence Session - OFWAT

11. Members noted this paper.

Item 10: Oral Evidence - OFWAT

12. A transcript of the session will be made publically available (via the RCEP website) following publication of the adaptation report.

Item 11: RCP(09)245 – Notes from the Brainstorming Session

13. Members noted this paper and used it to discuss a tentative structure for the final report.

Item 12: RCP(09)246 – Introduction Chapter – Draft

Item 13: RCP(09)248 – Impacts and Exemplars Chapter – Draft

Item 14: RCP(09)250 – Overarching Topics "A" Chapter – Draft

Item 15: RCP(09)251 - Overarching Topics "B" Chapter – Draft

Item 16: RCP(09)249 - Overarching Topics "C" Chapter – Draft

14. Members noted these papers.

Item 17: RCP(09)237 – Preparation for May Oral Evidence Session – Institute of Risk Management (IRM)

15. Members discussed the questions that would be posed to the IRM at the May meeting.

Item 18: RCP(09)238 – Preparation for May Oral Evidence Session – Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Council for Wales

16. Members noted this paper.

Item 19: RCP(09)235: Saline Intrusion, Groundwater and Habitat: Impacts of Sea Level Rise

17. *Debbie Putt* introduced this item. She reported that having spoken to the Environment Agency (EA), she learnt that although salt water intrusion into groundwater is an issue that is likely to be exacerbated by climate change, it is not considered to be as pressing an issue as agricultural and industrial pollution and changes in rainfall pattern. It was also reported that 80% of abstraction licences are not time-limited and that the EA would like to see these made time-limited. The issue of 'coastal squeeze' was raised, whereby strategic decisions at a national scale need to be made regarding the conservation of coastal regions and of freshwater resources. An example of the cost of replacing brackish habitats that are likely to be lost as a result of climate change was presented.

Item 20: RCP(09)234: RIVPACS and the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Under Climate Change

18. *Philine zu Ermgassen* introduced this item. She reported that the WFD is flexible enough to be able to take a dynamic view with regards to the species composition of a freshwater reference system. However, as a result of climate change, the baseline for biological assessments such as RIVPACS is shifting. The Commission doubted whether it would be possible to devise a new system of biological monitoring of freshwater system quality, as it is a dynamic system.

Item 21: RCP(09)231: Climate Change and Local, Regional and Devolved Government

19. Members discussed the paper in relation to the way in which mitigation and adaptation are often taken as two parts of the same problem, with adaptation ending up as the poor relation. They discussed the need to consider both mitigation and adaptation in policy decisions, and to recognise that adaptation is a constituent of risk management. The Commission agreed that adaptation and mitigation are different but some examples exist where they overlap. It was agreed there were some useful quotations in this paper that could be incorporated into the Commission's report.

Item 22: RCP(09)106: Preparation for Dinner Guest – Lord Smith

20. Members noted this paper.

Item 23: RCP(09)218: Comprehensive Area Assessment

Item 24: RCP(09)217: National Indicators

21. These papers were taken together. Members discussed National indicators 188 and 189, in that NI189 is entirely about flooding, and NI188, in relation to climate change, also included flooding. Members noted that NI189 is an output indicator, and that NI188 is a process indicator. Members discussed the rationale behind local authorities choosing 35 national indicators when they were audited across all 198, and agreed this would be raised with the Audit Commission during the May meeting. Members also discussed the overlap between various sets of Government-wide performance indicators, and how consistent they are.
22. *Jon Freeman* explained that PSAs drive Government behaviour and that they give an indication of what Westminster sees as important. PSA 27 is about climate change and adaptation. Members discussed the fact that this mechanism applies solely to England, and there is no mechanism to ensure that the devolved administrations work in the same way.

Item 25: RCP(09)240: Preparation for Oral Evidence Witnesses – LGA, WLGA, NILGA and COSLA

Item 26: Oral evidence session - LGA, WLGA, NILGA and COSLA

23. Members noted these papers. The transcript of the oral evidence session will be made publically available (via the RCEP website) following publication of the adaptation report.

Item 27: RCP(09)232: 'No regrets' and 'win win' Policy Proposals

24. Members discussed the 'cost' of adaption and mitigation in light of this paper, agreeing that it was unrealistic to think that adaptation measures were ultimately cost-free. Members agreed the need to be careful when using 'no regrets' arguments, and the case of 'win win win' whereby benefits are realised for adaptation, mitigation and biodiversity.

Item 28: RCP(09)230: Valuation and Appraisal

25. *Jon Freeman* introduced this paper, noting that Defra appear to be tackling the issue of monetising the cost of adaptation head on. Members noted that whilst cost-benefit analyses can be useful, there are other methods available – *Professor MacKerron* stated the Government has published a manual on multi-criteria methods, and he agreed to pass the reference to *Jon Freeman*. Action point:
- Professor MacKerron to provide reference for Government manual on multi-criteria methods for valuation and appraisal to *Jon Freeman*.

Item 29: RCP(09)252: Peer review of the draft Adaptation report

26. *Jon Freeman* introduced this item stating that he would be looking to use 1-2 people to review each chapter. Members suggested more

potential reviewers, and discussed the use of a someone with a science communication background to review the entire draft.

Item 30: RCP(09)239: Preparation for oral evidence session – the Audit Commission

27. Members noted this paper.

Item 31: Oral Evidence – Audit Commission

28. This session has now been moved to the May 2009 meeting.

Item 32: RCP(09)242: Preparation for oral evidence session – JNCC/IACCF

29. Members noted this paper.

Item 33: Oral evidence session – JNCC/IACCF

30. The transcript of the oral evidence session will be made publically available (via the RCEP website) following publication of the adaptation report.

ANNEX 1

List of Actions agreed at the Commission's meeting on 5th to 6th March 2009

Action Number	Action	By Whom
1	Secretariat to organise a meeting with Lord Hunt	Secretariat
2	Secretariat to organise a meeting between the Chairman and Gordon Conway	Secretariat
3	Professor MacKerron to provide reference for Government manual on multi-criteria methods for valuation and appraisal to Jon Freeman.	Prof MacKerron