

BIFoR Advisory Group Meeting
Friday 31st January 2020, 09:00-11:00 followed by lunch
Room 125, Geography Building, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston campus

1. Chair's Introduction

Laura Green welcomed the BIFoR Advisory Group members and thanked them for their time. Many members had also attended the BIFoR annual meeting on the 29 and 30 January 2020 and an evening dinner on 30 January.

2. Introductions from group members and notice of apologies

Present
Chaired by Laura Green, Head of College of Life and Environmental Sciences (LES)
Bill Bloss – Head of School Geography Earth and Environmental Sciences, UoB
Jo Bradwell, Honorary Professor of Immunology University of Birmingham
Alice Broome, Project Leader for Protected Species, Forest Research (joined by Skype)
Anna Brown, Head of Tree Health and Contingency, Forestry Commission England
Matt Elliott, Policy Advocate, Tree Health & Invasives, Woodland Trust
Jeanette Hall, Woodland Advisor, Scottish Natural Heritage
Neil Hotchin, Head of School for Biosciences, UoB
Robert Jackson, BIFoR Director and Chair in Tree Pathology
David Johnson, Chair in Microbial Ecology, University of Manchester
Estrella Luna-Diez, member of the BIFoR Science Committee
Rob MacKenzie, BIFoR Director
Robin May, BIFoR challenger and Director of Institute of Microbiology and Infection, UoB
Richard Norby, Oakridge Laboratory, USA
Ghilleen Prance, formerly Director of Royal Botanical Gardens KEW
Jeremy Pritchard, Director of Education and BIFoR (Education)
Nicola Spence, Chief Plant Health Officer, Defra and University of Birmingham
Deanne Brettie – BIFoR Project Administrator and secretary to the Advisory Group
Apologies
Dr Clive Elphick, independent Director with the National Grid Gas Place and National Grid Electricity Transmission Plc, on the Board of the Environment Agency
Prof Christine Foyer - member of the BIFoR Science Committee
Prof Vincent Gauci - member of the BIFoR Science Committee
Prof France Pope – member of the BIFoR Science Committee
Professor Malcolm Press, Vice Chancellor, University of Manchester

The group discussed the Advisory Group membership. There was agreement that we are missing social scientist(s), economics and industry representation. Potential members to invite were discussed.

There was also a discussion about potentially bringing in further expertise from representatives in relation to with water and entomology. This led to a discussion around the potential of having in the future smaller “user groups” linked to the Advisory Group or inviting specialists to join meetings as and when required.

The Group discussed the BIFoR annual report and the papers circulated in advance of the meeting. After receiving the annual report, the papers and attending some/all of the 2 day BIFoR meeting the members felt they were very well informed about the progress and vision of the Institute. The posters and some of the presentations will be made available on the BIFoR [website](#) soon. The BIFoR annual report online PDF version will link to the posters /presentations as well. The group agreed that having the same format in 2021 of the 2 day annual meeting followed by the Advisory Group meeting would work well. It was noted that a longer 3 hour meeting on the last day would be possible for most members although some members do have very long return journeys. Potentially, we could hold the BIFoR 2-day meeting on the Tuesday and Wednesday followed by the Advisory Group on the Thursday. It is anticipated that research underway in relation to tree health will be a substantial agenda item for the 2021 Advisory Group meeting.

Action Deanne Brettle to look into venues and availability for the BIFoR annual meeting in 2021 and circulate the dates to Advisory Group members well in advance.

Action Deanne Brettle to note for the organising committee of the BIFoR annual meeting 2021 that a book of abstracts for talks and posters would be welcomed & that technical support should be booked in advance. Also, to avoid presentations being potentially perceived as disjointed, the running order should be carefully considered and practice runs are advisable for all BIFoR FACE researchers to hear what one another will present in advance.

3. BIFoR progress to date & going forward – Rob MacKenzie and Science Committee

The slides from Rob MacKenzie will be circulated with the minutes.

There was discussion amongst the group regarding the way results from BIFoR FACE are communicated. The need for caution / caveats when presenting data is important, for example putting into context that the effect we see is for that particular year and that the change could be variable year on year.

The results and data so far can help drive the hypotheses and through the BIFoR Science Committee we can identify; what research we need to pursue; what other 'systems' we should be looking at; model our mechanistic understanding. This area is something the Advisory Group could give advice on in between physical meetings.

The recruitment of the BIFoR Data Manager in 2019 is a significant step forward for the Institute.

There are discussions underway about lab space on campus for BIFoR research and the possibility of appointing a 'Curator of Physical samples'. Rich Norby expressed the importance of having archived / accessible samples – this led to a discussion about whether we're taking enough samples and all the samples we need. The Science Committee will work on developing the list and this is something the Advisory Group can give advice on in between physical meetings. David Johnson informed the group that his Lab have written a paper on the importance of **how** to store samples and he offered to share this with BIFoR when it is available.

The paper Norby et al (2015) 'Model–data synthesis for the next generation of forest free-air CO₂ enrichment (FACE) experiments' <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26249015> was suggested as good additional background reading regarding FACE experiments.

There was a discussion around BIFoR FACE being in a unique position to be able to offer the capacity for multi-factor studies. There are tens of thousands of papers written about single climate factors but very few (circa 5) on multi-factor studies. Rob MacKenzie shared that as part of the QUINTUS NERC large grant there will be nutrient addition plots based outside of the FACE arrays. There is scope to change the experimental design of the eCO₂ and aCO₂ FACE array research plots but it has not been considered to date or written into any proposals.

Further to a discussion about a potential gap in the knowledge related to entomological molecular research, Rob MacKenzie noted that he'd worked on a grant proposal with Darren Evans from University of Newcastle on just this kind of research - 'Examining the impacts of elevated carbon dioxide on the robustness of forest species-interaction networks: a DNA-metabarcoding approach'.

Upcoming conferences

- a. Forest Edge doctoral researchers' conference, 1-2 July 2020: [Treescapes 2020](#)
- b. Mixed planting conference, 28-29 Oct 2020: **Trees for the Future - Diversity and complexity for resilience and carbon storage**

4. Terms of reference for Advisory Group

Action Deanne to email the Advisory Group in the near future to ask if they are happy to ratify the terms of reference (paper 6)

Papers for advance reading and information

Paper 1: Updated members of the BIFoR Advisory Group

Paper 2: Minutes of the last BIFoR Advisory Group held 24 May 2017

Paper 3: BIFoR organisational structure and themes

Paper 4: BIFoR 2019 Annual report

Paper 5: Strategic Programme Area (SPA) The Form, Function and Future of UK Treescapes

Paper 6: Draft terms of reference

Dates of next meetings

TBC 29 January 2021