

**Marine Ecosystem Group meeting 6**  
**Tuesday 06 November 2012, 10:50 – 15:30**  
**Countryside Council for Wales, Rhodfa Padarn, Aberystwyth**

**Minutes**

Present Paul Brazier(CCW), Gill Bell (MCS) - audio, Blaise Bullimore (CBEEMS), Laura Jones (NT), Jen Kelly (Ceredigion), Alison Palmer-Hargrave (Gwynedd), Judith Oakley (Swansea / Uni), Martyn Evans (Monmouth), Liz Morris (EcoSol), Pippa Moore (Aberystwyth Uni), Roger Cook (Welsh Fed of Sea Anglers).

Apologies Ben Wray, Sue Burton, Jan Hiddink, Shelagh Malham, Nia Haf Jones, Richard Unsworth

**Item**

**Action Points**

**1. Introductions, apologies & domestic arrangements, agenda etc.**

A late start due to delays in arrival at the meeting room. Introductions were made.

As of April 2013, CCW, Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission in Wales will be formed into a new body: Natural Resources Wales.

**2. Update from the academics workshop run by WBP.**

PB gave an update of the WBP academics workshop on 11<sup>th</sup> Sept, previously provided to the group as a paper from Tracey Lovering. The WBP Research Strategy project outline was noted. Progress on the marine evidence gaps paper had stalled due to staff shortage, but has now been considered further by PB (and others in this meeting, see below) and has been forwarded to Mike Bruford and Geoff Proffitt. PM explained how the REF (Research Excellence Framework) provides the opportunity to recognise the level of policy take-up of research outcomes and the value of this in bringing the environmental research needs and academics' involvement together.

PM asked how people were selected to be invited to the academics workshop, and it was pointed out that expressions of interest were taken in 2009/10, following which there may be more academics relevant to partake. It was noted that people interested might like to contact Tracey Lovering.

Dr Rhoda Ballinger (Cardiff University) was identified as a valuable contact with respect to physical data such as hydrodynamics and geomorphology.

The Universities in Wales have collated a list of student dissertations that will prove useful in identifying some previously *unseen* research. This should be followed up as a potential 'gap filler'.

**3. Further consideration of the evidence gaps spreadsheet.**

This exercise took the bulk of the meeting. PB presented the evidence gaps spreadsheet as it stands and the already partly prioritised list was further

**1) ?? to investigate collation of student dissertation titles in the Universities**

**2) Ben Wray to liaise with Maggie Hatton-Ellis**

prioritised by the group, to assist Mike Bruford and Geoff Proffitt in taking this spreadsheet forward with other ecosystem group spreadsheets. Whether or not an evidence need could be fulfilled by research was first completed. The following points were raised:

- Each of the evidence needs in the spreadsheet is a collation of different strands of information from numerous sources that were aggregated into common themes. They are very broad, and once prioritised, will need to be broken down into 'research questions'. They remain useful as broad *evidence needs* in order to identify areas of work, in relation to potential future proposals for work (e.g. equivalent to the ERD fund).
- There has been some link up between the CCW actions database and the collation of the evidence needs, but the point was raised by AP-H that this is important, to avoid having parallel systems that are duplicating work.
- LM suggested an additional column in the spreadsheet, detailing known work in this area, including EFF / WBP projects or CCW.
- The substantial EFF funded project at Bangor University (Mike Kaiser) is likely to provide valuable information on fishing effort, catch effectiveness and commercial fisheries stock assessments in Wales in the next 2 years.
- The Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) approach was identified as being relevant to managing commercial fisheries as well as relating to the sustainability agenda, but is likely to take numerous iterations before a reliable value for MSY is achieved (RC).
- Numerous 'evidence needs' described in the spreadsheet are subsets of other, broader evidence needs, e.g. m2.1 encompasses m2.3 and m2.4. Therefore, at a higher level, m2.1 is a useful description, but to develop better 'research question', then m2.3 and m2.4 are perhaps more useful.
- Climate change was not accounted for in the top priorities, but this was considered acceptable, since there are already a considerable number of projects and researchers studying the effects of climate change on the marine environment (sea level rise, mitigation, and acidification). Climate change related evidence needs have been identified at a lower priority.
- BB pointed out that the evidence needs may, in part, reflect lack of circulation of research and data being held privately.
- There are still considerable gaps in survey and monitoring that are not considered as research. There is currently no program to resolve these gaps, although part of the remit of the Natural Resources Wales body and the Wales Coastal Monitoring Centre (primarily collating beach profiles, physical parameters and types of shore defence information) may deal with some.
- Further work can be done to highlight the policy context of each evidence gap.

#### 4. Feedback from the WBP conference in September.

A final paper on the proceedings of the WBP conference (12/13 Sept) has not

**with respect to actions in the CCW actions database that relate to the evidence gaps program. Report back to the MEG.**

**3) Roger Cook to forward minutes of Bangor University EFF funded project. - DONE**

**4) PB to forward details when**

yet been released. Materials are expected on the Wales Biodiversity Conference website soon (<http://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/en-GB/Wales-Biodiversity-Partnership-Conference>).

It was discussed that a workshop in the WBP conference reviewed a draft structure suggested by the Welsh Government, to aid development of the Wales Biodiversity Strategy. It was mentioned that a new marine working group was suggested but nothing confirmed on this.

It was noted that there were no marine posters or display. It was felt that, in the light of *marine* having a very small presence at the WBP conference, this was an important opportunity to fly the flag!

#### **5. Targets for Section 42 habitats and species.**

The S42 habitat and species targets were sent around the group on 25<sup>th</sup> June, and are working towards more realistic / achievable targets. There were no major comments from the group. Ben Wray is currently working on making available targets and maps of the S42 habitats through BARS. There is some lack of clarity as to how ERD funded projects will report through BARS.

S42 habitat maps show that these habitats and species are found much wider than just designated sites and this is where Local BAP action can be of great value. The habitats and species have been labelled according to their relevance at a Local, Regional or National level (i.e. Harbour porpoise are thought to roam widely and it is not appropriate for each LBAP to consider them in isolation).

#### **6. Ecosystem Resilience and Diversity Fund (ERD) projects update.**

PB gave an update on the feedback of the ERD fund (see attached below) and update on the Risso's dolphin project (from Fiona Read CCW).

#### **7. Present ERD project 'Fisheries productivity value...'**

Richard Unsworth was unable to attend the meeting, so a full update was not possible.

#### **8. Update on ERD project 'Porth Dinllaen seagrass'.**

AP-H gave an interesting update on the assorted projects currently under way at Porth Dinllaen, in relation to the seagrass beds and the moorings. Other than the ERD funded project, there are also numerous MSC projects, National Trust and Gwynedd Council lead activities, e.g. fish surveys (SEACAMS), Eco-moorings project, EA acoustic survey, SeagrassWatch newsletter and volunteer surveys of mooring scars (Marine EcoSol). From the outset, stakeholders have been on board and this gives the projects a good foundation and community support.

See: <http://www.penllynarsarnau.co.uk/projects.aspx?lang=pages&id=19>

**website updated.**

**NB. MEG to organise marine posters for next conference – maybe of ERD projects?**

**5) Ben Wray to further establish S42 habitats and species data on BARS.**

**6) PB to check the status of the BAP Atlas 2010.**

## 9. Messages to take to the Chair of Chairs meeting, 20th November.

- update on the evidence needs spreadsheet
- importance of integrating streams of work across the agencies (actions database, habitat creation, etc)
- The benefit of having Welsh Government (WG) representatives on the MEG and the full support of the WG.
- Update on proposed marine biodiversity framework / strategy for Wales?

**7) PB to discuss marine LBAP issues at next chair of chairs meeting (see 10).**

## 10. Future priorities for the MEG.

The content of the agenda reflects the current activities that draw on the expertise of the membership of the MEG. Local action has been raised by the WBP secretariat as an area for further development LBAP do not however have expertise in the marine environment, making the establishment of local actions very difficult / impossible. LBAP officers require considerable support, in the form of a full time officer, to help write and understand the LBAP and to implement them. It is felt that there is the enthusiasm and desire to add marine actions to the LBAP. Additional guidance and a template would help in this process. Equally, the outcomes of discussions at LBAP meetings can help MEG to develop further evidence needs and BAP targets. Since Aethne left CCW, there has been no capacity to support LBAP.

As with other Ecosystem Groups, there is a hiatus currently, until the WBP Review is completed. The Group will maintain moving forward with current activities.

## 11. AoB.

- GB: presented the WG announcement of the way forward for Marine Conservation Zones. This has subsequently been sent to the membership.
- GB: pointed out the DEFRA announcement on the modified implementation of Article 6 of the Habitats Regulations (Change of approach to management of fisheries in European marine sites in England). I believe that we are still awaiting a release on the context in Wales from the WG?
- ME pointed out the Habitat Creation proposal in Somerset as part of the compensation for habitat (saltmarsh) loss in the Severn estuary SAC. This is part of the EA National Habitat Creation Program (Wales-wide creation of saltmarsh).
- JO: Announcement that there is a 'low carbon research' conference next week in Cardiff.
- JO: Announcement that the annual Porcupine Marine Natural History Society conference will be taking place in Swansea in 2013. Student

**8) Actions for links to be sent around the membership**

posters and talks are welcome.

- **BB:** Announcement of the 'Problems of small estuaries' symposium run jointly by SEACAMS and IECS, which is 3<sup>rd</sup> in a series of such symposia, at Swansea University. This is planned for April 2013.
- Roger Cook announced the WWF PISCES LIFE project, details of which have been forwarded to the membership.

## ERD fund feedback information

### 4 marine projects submitted:

Project Title	Project owner
Risso's dolphins in north Wales	Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society (WDCS)
The function and restoration of biogenic reefs formed by <i>Sabellaria</i>	Bangor university
Fisheries productivity value of sensitive marine habitats (FiPSeM)	Swansea University
Porth Dinllaen Seagrass – monitoring habitat recovery	Gwynedd Council

### Feedback

There was a high level of applications across most of the Ecosystem Groups for the ERD fund this year. There were a total of 79 applications, most of which were eligible for the funding. Whilst there were 51 projects brought to the final assessment panel (totalling £2 million), 32 projects were prioritised for funding within the capacity of £1 million available from the Welsh Government.

All of the 10 marine projects put forward demonstrated benefits to the maintenance or our understanding of marine Section 42 habitats and species, but inevitably, these projects needed prioritisation, along with those of other ecosystem groups, to narrow down the full range of projects.

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### The latest info from WDC regarding the Risso's dolphin project:

Preliminary results are as following:

- 116 hours of land-based effort on 23 days
- 93 land-based sightings of 135 harbour porpoises on effort
- 1 land-based sighting of 6 Risso's dolphins on effort
- 1 land-based sighting of 5 bottlenose dolphins on effort
- 14 sightings of 34 harbour porpoises off effort
- 13 sightings of 43 Risso's dolphins off effort
- 1 sighting of 5 bottlenoses off effort
- 4.5 hours of boat-based watching on 2 days
- 1 boat-based sightings of 30+ common dolphins
- 1 boat-based sighting of 10+ Risso's and 2 common dolphins

We also seem to already have a match of one Risso's seen last year and again this year, but we still have to go through all 362 pictures taken during our encounter to confirm this and to see if we have further matches.

The weather seems to have been really bad, so they didn't manage to do as much field work as hoped.