



EMS Officer Blaise Bullimore

MINUTES OF MEETING

TUESDAY 29 APRIL 2008

WILDFOWL & WETLANDS TRUST, PENCLACWYDD, LLANELLI

Present

Jane Hodges (JH) Acting-chair	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)
Julian Atkins (JA)	City & County of Swansea (CCoS)
Blaise Bullimore (BB)	EMS Officer
Anne Bunker (AB)	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Phil Coates (PC)	South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (SWSFC)
Kate Collins (KC)	Environment Agency Wales (EAW)
Zigg Otto (ZO)	CCW
Dusi Thomas (DT)	Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water (DCWW)
Rebecca Wright (RW)	CCW
<i>For item 1</i>	
Gareth Jones (GJ)	EAW
Lewis Keil (LK)	DCWW
Rod Thomas	EAW

1 Burry Inlet storm-water discharges and cockle mortalities

The acting chair welcomed GJ and LK and thanked them for accepting the RAG's invitation to provide briefings to the Group.

GJ gave a presentation which summarised the EA's view of the current situation with cockle mortality and the investigations being carried out to identify possible causes.

Noted: The cause of the mortalities is currently unknown and maybe due to a number of factors

LK provided a comprehensive overview of the history and current situation regarding sewage and storm drainage, treatment and outfalls.

GJ and LK took questions and the presentations were followed by a detailed discussion.

Noting that this item had taken almost two hours, it was agreed to truncate the agenda considerably in order to complete essential business by the time several members had to leave at 13.00 hrs.

2 (Agenda 1) Apologies & personnel matters

Apologies:

Deb Hill, Chair	City & County of Swansea
Simeon Jones	Carmarthenshire County Council
Isabel Macho	Carmarthenshire County Council
Trevor Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council

Members noted that Deb Hill was commencing a phased return to work this week; they requested JA pass on the Group's best wishes.

3 (Agenda 2) Minutes of meeting 26 February 2008

Accepted without amendment.

4 (Agenda 3) Matters arising from minutes of 26 February 2008 & not on the agenda

Noted:

- separate list of outstanding actions also circulated. JH stressed need for members to scrutinise and take actions relevant to them. Return to list and actions in previous minutes at next meeting.
ACTION: ALL
- need to ensure responses by individual relevant authorities to SMP2 consultation draw attention to the EMS as current draft is inconsistent in addressing the site.
- DT to take advice from Lewis Keil in addressing her outstanding action.

5 (Agenda 11) Dates of next meetings

Weds 9 July 2008 confirmed.

Subsequent meeting: Weds 17 September 2008 agreed.

Agreed: with effect from next meeting, meetings to commence at 10.00 hrs rather than 10.30, despite early start required by those travelling from Pembrokeshire and Cardiff area.

6 (Agenda 5) Budget & finance planning

a) Report for FY 2007-08

Noted:

- Despite spending substantially less than the budgeted expenditure for the year, expenditure exceeded income by c.£2,500; ie the RAG is now dependant on reserves.
- Resolving an apparent discrepancy in reserves value between CCoS's and BB's figures is in hand.
ACTION: BB / JA
- A 2007-08 financial summary would be circulated with the minutes.
ACTION: BB
- Submitting contributions close to the end of the FY means that CCoS must carry the burden of RAG expenditure throughout most of the year; this has only been of minor consequence over recent years because of the reserve that built up when no officer was in post between 2004 and 2006.

Agreed:

- Revise timing of contributions to CCoS as finances host authority. Relevant members to make necessary arrangements. **ACTION: ALL CONTRIBUTING RA MEMBERS**
- Issue invoices for contributions in second quarter. **ACTION: BB / JA / CCoS**

b) EMS officer contract

Noted:

- JA had e-mailed all contributing authorities seeking confirmation of contributions. Responses received from all except EA and PCNPA.

ACTION: ALL TO RESPOND / CONFIRM RESPONSE PROVIDED IN WRITING

- No follow up received from CCC despite positive response to BB's presentation to Director of Leisure & Regeneration and team. No response yet received from recent renewed approaches by BB to PCC's Head of Planning in an attempt to revive engagement and renew contributions.

Remainder of this agenda item postponed

7 (Agenda 6) CB&E site assessment & report to EC

Noted:

- JH had written, as actioned at previous meeting, to CCW's CX, requesting at least comparable information to that provided to the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC RAG. A response, from David Worrall, Regional Manager West Wales, had been received (copies accompany these minutes).
- The information provided appeared to be in less detail than that provided for Pembrokeshire Marine SAC in response to a similar request from the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC RAG.
- The letter was in error in stating that the information provided was already available on the JNCC website; there was slightly more information in the table accompanying the letter. Some discrepancies with the information on the JNCC website had been noted¹.

Agreed: the level of detail was considerably less than is necessary to inform relevant authorities of problem issues, likely causes and where the responsibility lies for management action; and to enable them to fulfil their statutory duties and not have to make management decisions in a vacuum.

¹ There are a number of discrepancies between the information in the table accompanying the letter and the information currently on the JNCC website, the draft for comment information previously on the JNCC website, and the spreadsheet provided to EA previously circulated to members. The table also omits three features (Atlantic salt-meadow; *Salicornia* & other annuals; otter).

Estuaries are reported as *favourable* condition in the table, but as *unfavourable* in the JNCC draft, *not assessed* in the current JNCC report and *unfavourable-declining* in the table provided to the EA.

Intertidal sand and mud flats are reported as *unfavourable status* in the table, but as *favourable* in the JNCC draft, and as *not assessed* in the current JNCC report.

Large shallow inlets and bays are reported as *favourable* in the table (subject to amendment to resolve "assessment inconsistency") and the JNCC draft, but as *not assessed* in the current JNCC report.

Noted:

- An exercise to split all designated sites (including EMS) into “units” based on site designations and ownership has been completed. An ‘Integrated Sites Information System (ISIS) Action Database’ is being populated with these units and their management requirements in response to a CCW Welsh Assembly management planning target. The development of actions has been shared with partners (though only terrestrial landowners were cited as examples) and the database will be made available on-line later in 2008.
- Members were concerned that this would generate a need for even greater detail on conservation objectives and assessments.

7 Pressures, threats & issues – filling gaps & next steps

Postponed

8 EMS officer report

Postponed

9 Relevant authority updates

a) information exchange

Noted:

(PC) Cockle mortalities had again commenced but appeared limited to one location on north side of Burry Inlet at present. Initial reports of mortality in Three Rivers unfounded to date. A substantial interim report has been produced by the research partnership.

(KC) GJ in post (on secondment) to lead EAW input into investigation.

(RW) CCW in-house meeting with science staff and contractors to review existing bird food modelling and data was to be held the following day.

(JA) CCoS JUDP out for consultation until 12 May.

(PC) Presence of slipper limpet (*Crepidula*) chains has been confirmed at Burry Port. Chains imply a presence for some time. None observed recorded at Whiteford or Pwll to date. Concern regarding risk of transfer to north Wales in association with mussel seed transfer.

(ZO) *Crepidula* reported from Nobel Banks aggregates surveys.

b) research & monitoring reports

Noted:

- Positive article noting recovery of common scoter since Sea Empress oil spill published in current edition of BTO News, and similar, more detailed paper in press in Marine Pollution Bulletin. However, interim BTO report of winter 2007-08 monitoring shows numbers considerable reduced; land counts lowest since oil spill. The a single aerial count was higher but still well down on recent years (*pers comm.* Bill Sanderson, CCW). BB to circulate all three.

ACTION: BB

- Seawatching data from Pembrokeshire also indicates low numbers.
- Apparently contradictory statements between BTO News article and interim report concerning prey stocks. Lack of prey stock monitoring and lack of information on scoter's wellbeing during the bulk of the year when elsewhere than Carmarthen Bay precludes conjecture whether drop in numbers is a site issue or a problem elsewhere in life-cycle.
- Scoter monitoring has been cut from the CCW monitoring programme this year.

Agreed: CCW to report on future scoter and scoter supporting habitat monitoring to next meeting.
AB to follow up and arrange.

ACTION: AB

(BB) MCS Outer Bristol Channel megafauna surveys report. BB to circulate.

ACTION: BB

10 Other business

Noted:

(PC) Marine Bill consultation: substantial mismatches between some sections of policy statement and the draft Bill's actual clauses.

(ZO) Draft regulations for transposition of EC Environmental Liability Directive into UK law is open for consultation until 27 May 2008²; the draft Regulations were reported as weak.

(RW) requested a meeting of the Work Programme sub-group³.

(JA) DH had returned to work on reduced hours for the time being; details to be determined.

(JH / ZO) The due date of early April for release of revised Regulation 33 advice had now passed. End of May is now current revised target date; 2005 draft package (available on CCW website⁴) should be used in the interim.

Reminder next meeting: 10.00 hrs Weds 9 July 2008.

Meeting closed at 13.20

² <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/liability/>

³ RW referred to the EMS Officer "steering group"; however, this was superseded by the Work Programme sub-group in September 2006 (refer minutes 18.9.06)

⁴ Direct link provided on CB&E EMS website.