



MINUTES OF MEETING

WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2010

WILDFOWL & WETLANDS TRUST, PENCLACWYDD, LLANELLI

Present

Jane Hodges (JHs) Chair	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)
Blaise Bullimore (BB)	EMS Officer
Anne Bunker (AB)	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Alex Harding (AH)	CCW
Lewis Keil (LK)	Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water (DCWW)
Suzanne Waldron (SW)	Environment Agency Wales (EAW), Team Leader, Planning

1 Welcome, apologies & domestics

Apologies:

Dusi Thomas	DCWW
Deb Hill	City & County of Swansea (phoned apology rec'd during meeting)
John Hogg	EAW
Simeon Jones	Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC)
Lindsey Rendle	CCC
Trevor Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council

Introductions were made for the benefit of SW attending on behalf of John Hogg

Agreed: as a cost saving measure, provision of coffee and tea for RAG meetings funded from the RAG budget would be discontinued.

2 Annual (re)appointment Chair & Vice-chair

BB took chair temporarily. Nominations / re-nominations were requested. All present agreed JH to remain as Chair and DH as Vice-Chair.

JH resumed chair.

3 Minutes of meeting 25 June 2010

Agreed without amendment.

4 Matters arising from minutes of 25 June 2010 & not on the agenda

Item 3: action on JHg (EAW) carried forward, though SW to attempt to locate press release and to forward. **Action: SW / JHg**

Item 4: action for all carried forward and action for BB clarified to preparing a brief 'script' for members to forward to appropriate senior colleagues. **Action: BB / ALL**

Item 7: contact details for author of bacteriological study provided by LK.

Several specific queries to members inserted in current draft of Technical Annex 6¹ remain unanswered. **Action: ALL**

5 Annual review MoU and ToR

MoU – accepted and reconfirmed.

ToR – accepted and reconfirmed.

6 Briefing on working of Burry Inlet MoU and EAW's view of relationship between MoU and RAG

Noted:

SW is reviewing and revising MoU on behalf of EAW, in part to enable better understanding of MoU by potential developers, specifically to address issues on the Carmarthenshire side of the Burry Inlet.

Annexes are being proposed to the draft MoU:

1 - Register for Llanelli of opportunities for potential schemes to reduce surface water entering the system to free up headroom for new foul water inputs; aims for net reduction in hydraulic load to reduce frequency of spills. Register split by sewage catchments to ensure developers able to identify projects that both self-mitigate proposed developments and make contribution to overall improvement in hydraulic loads

2 - Guidance Information on above

3 - Register for surface water schemes for Gowerton

4 - Register of phosphate removal scheme operating at Llannant

5 - Guidance information on above

6 - Roles of MoU signatory organisations including roles in implementation of the MoU

Drivers for MoU include all relevant European water quality Directives and Habitats Directive.

Revisions to existing consent conditions have been developed following the formal Review of Consents (RoC) exercise.

EAW consider that Burry / Loughor estuary system is phosphate limited and phosphate reduction is an agreed target, but CCW is responsible for the identification of the effects of hypernutrification on conservation status in the context of the conservation objectives.

Agreed: More effective links between MoU and CB&E management scheme need to be developed. SW suggested adding appropriate wording to the appendices. BB to liaise with SW.

Action: BB / SW

¹ By way of assistance: pages 77, 73, 78, 79, 105, 137-8, 154, 164, 167, 174, 176, 177, 184, 192, 206, 213

Noted: Development of the MoU with respect to City & Council of Swansea is less advanced. A meeting to address its development is being convened and an invitation will likely be issued to JH as Chair.

Agreed: involvement of EMS Officer would be helpful and demonstrate a positive intent to integrate MoU with the EMS MS. SW to investigate invitation being issued to BB instead (or in addition). **Action: SW**

SW had been tasked by JH to provide briefing on MoU but was unable to provide EAW view on relationship between it and RAG.

7 Work programme

Noted:

MS action planning had continued to be very slow with insufficient engagement by some RAG members and continued difficulty securing effective engagement with WAG Fisheries and Marine Branch.

BB and Sue Burton (Pembroke Marine SAC) had again met with Graham Rees (Head WAG Fish unit) and Julia Williams (Head WAG Marine Branch) with the intention of moving forward with action planning and action implementation (Pembroke Marine) respectively (as agreed at previous meeting and noted as an action in the notes of that meeting appended to the minutes of the last RAG mtg on 25 June). BB and SB had intended that the meeting be split into two one-to-one sessions but this was not achieved and most of the discussion focussed on general issues, including key issues:

- the future for WAG fisheries stakeholder engagement will be via new regional stakeholder groups. It was suggested by WAG that these groups should be good platforms for raising EMS related issues;
- species reviews are being undertaken as a precursor to developing species management plans;
- WAG Fisheries will be undertaking a complete review of current legal management measures over the forthcoming several years; consultation on recommendations arising from these reviews will undertaken through the regional stakeholder groups.

BB/SB had expressed the hope that they will be integrated with EMS management;

It was accepted that WAG fisheries and EMS environmental requirements overlap and it was recommended that EMS actions be branded appropriately to be acceptable to the fishing industry and packaged within fisheries management documents such as Welsh Fisheries Strategy Implementation Plans.

It was suggested that as well as agreeing a direction of travel, EMS management aims should focus on a small number of highest priorities to avoid nothing getting done.

A specific technical meeting to discuss action planning for Carmarthen Bay & Estuaries EMS was requested (and subsequently arranged for 18 October).

Julia Williams reported that she had again contacted CCW and EA regarding resourcing RAGs.

Agreed:

RAG participation on regional stakeholder group appeared important; BB to draft request letter for chair to send. **Action: BB / JH**

Noted:

BB had spent time reading and attempting to abstract relevant useful information from EAW's RoC documents (Stage III appropriate assessment and Stage IV site management plan) and CCW's special sites database (SSD).

The significant difficulties encountered with both the functionality and content of the SSD were described. Comments on functionality are to be forwarded to CCW database management team with recommendations for improvement. AB has been tasked to QC the content for this site and requested that issues regarding content be raised with her in the first instance.

WAG Marine Branch and Fish Unit had both advised that the SSD will be their key driver for action in EMS.

The SSD is not an alternative management plan for EMS but a repository of actions.

Agreed: actions in CCW's SSD need to closely reflect the actions identified in the MS; BB to liaise with AB (and other CCW staff as appropriate) **Action: BB / AB**

Noted:

A few members of the work programme sub-group had met to review the work programme prior to this meeting. Progress and the current situation had been noted, and it has been agreed that:

- action planning had slipped by six months already;
- if identification of actions proceeds without full engagement by all players it should be possible to complete the task by the end of the calendar year and to address any disagreements during the internal consultation prior to release for public consultation;
- all subsequent tasks be rolled back by three quarters of a year;
- there was little scope to shorten the time required for subsequent tasks.

It was acknowledged that there were risks of further delays in the development process during internal consultations with relevant and competent authorities, and that serious delays had occurred at these stages with other schemes.

Agreed: extend action planning task to end fourth quarter and roll back timelines of other tasks accordingly. **Action: BB**

Noted: the Severn Estuary EMS group of relevant authorities (ASERA) delegated the task of assessing pressures and threats and identification of management actions required to a working group that actively assists the ASERA officer.

8 Budget & resources

Noted:

Since budget summary circulated with agenda, it appears that EAW may be able to contribute £3k this FY; confirmation awaited.

There is no confirmation of contribution from PCNPA for 2011-12; contribution shown needs to be replaced with a question mark

Based on committed income and current expenditure assumptions, RAG forecast to run out of resources about Sept – Oct 2011 unless contributions re-established or reconfirmed.

Agreed:

- revise budget summary once EAW contribution confirmed or not and re-circulate; **Action: BB**
- all contributing members to try and maintain status quo; **Action: ALL**
- budget and future resourcing of RAG to be key agenda item for next meeting.

Noted:

Possible EC funding bids are being discussed by GEMS; given likely constraints, there was little enthusiasm from members for such an initiative.

At the recent Wales Biodiversity conference the EC Environment Commissioner had stated unequivocally that Natura 2000 was the cornerstone of EU biodiversity policy, that the UK must invest as much as is necessary to deliver effective management and restoration and that the importance of investment is not recognised. BB had asked the Commissioner and the Wales Environment Minister where the investment should come from but had received very vague responses. However, the Commissioner had stated that the current economic crisis is not an excuse for avoidance or delay for biodiversity action and the Minister had stressed the need for integration with the sustainability agenda.

Meeting in CCoS planned for following week to discuss separation of CB&E EMS resources from Nature Conservation Team budget.

9 MS action planning

Continuation of detailed scrutiny of draft identified management actions postponed because of time constraints.

10 EMSO report

In addition to activity recorded above:

Exploring funding possibilities – GEMS

Revised website development

WBP Marine Ecosystem Group (BB now chair of group)

WBP conference

Leave

11 RA updates

a) consents & information

See confidential annex

b) research & monitoring

Noted:

Scoter distribution summary and oystercatcher monitoring paper circulated prior to meeting.

Covering e-mail from CCW had commented that “the Burry is no longer able to support the population of oystercatcher for which the site was designated. It is probable that the annual cockle die-offs now render the site unfavourable.” and CCW has not allocated enough resources to continue to monitor the site.

Outputs from the EAW monitoring buoy in the estuary would be of interest to members; SW agreed to attempt to obtain and circulate details.

Action: SW

12 Other urgent business

None raised

Date(s) and agenda items for next meeting(s)

10.00 hrs Weds 8 or 15 December (to be confirmed²); EAW offices Cross Hands (tbc)

Key agenda items: budget and future direction of RAG; management scheme

Meeting closed at 16.05

² Following meeting, 8 December has been identified as unsuitable for several members