



**MINUTES OF MEETING
THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2011**

WILDFOWL & WETLANDS TRUST, PENCLACWYDD, LLANELLI

Present

Jane Hodges (JHs) Chair	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)
Eifion Bowen (EB)	Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC)
Blaise Bullimore (BB)	EMS Officer
Anne Bunker (AB)	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Alex Harding (AH)	CCW
Deb Hill (DH)	City & County of Swansea
John Hogg (JHg)	Environment Agency Wales
Fergus O'Brien (FO)	Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water
Lindsey Rendle (LR)	CCC
Trevor Theobald (TT)	Pembrokeshire County Council
Dusi Thomas (DT)	DCWW

1 Welcome, apologies & domestics

Apologies:

Simeon Jones CCC

DT introduced Fergus O'Brien, DCWW Coastal Waters Manager, who will be taking over from DT on the RAG. Members thanked DT for her contribution to the RAG's work.

2 Minutes of meeting 15 December 2010

Agreed without amendment.

3 Matters arising from minutes of 15 December 2010 & not on the agenda

Items 3 & 9: representation on regional Inshore Fisheries Group (IFG) and engagement with WAG Fish.

Noted: an invitation had been extended for one representative from EMSs on each regional IFG. BB had liaised with the EMS officers for Pembrokeshire Marine (PM) and the Severn Estuary and it had been agreed to nominate Sue Burton (PM), with BB as deputy. The proposal had been accepted by the PM RAG.

Agreed: accept proposal and advise PM RAG accordingly.

Noted:

- correspondence from WAG Fish to both the Chair and PM RAG chair had focussed on reiterating that WAG is not a relevant authority but had not addressed specific questions on how practical engagement could be achieved;
- engagement of inshore fisheries managers is critical to the delivery of favourable conservation status for EMS, and delivering Wales Environment Strategy Outcome 21.

Agreed: clearly little point in pursuing the matter; continue to engage as best as possible to address issues as they arise, including development of the management scheme.

Item 3: EA monitoring buoy data. *Noted:* data currently being quality assessed. Action carried forward. **Action: JHg**

Item 4: Burry Inlet MoU. *Noted:*

- nothing heard from David Gill, CCoS;
- technical meeting had been held; focussed on revisiting technical calculations for water removal; more surface water could be removed increasing possible betterment;
- no date known for next MoU meeting.

In response to a query regarding a comment reportedly in an advice letter from David Tyldesley (David Tyldesley & Associates) to CCoS regarding lack of clarity in CCW conservation objectives, DH advised that DT had expressed reservations and agreed to circulate letter to members. CCW members were unaware of a response from CCW. **Action: DH¹**

Item 6a: EAW responsibilities in respect of invasive non-native species. Action carried forward.

Item 6b: Scoter monitoring. *Noted:* some scoter monitoring is being undertaken this winter. A revised aerial survey technique using high resolution digital photography from a greater altitude is being trialled. "Reasonable" numbers, with a different distribution to recent years, have been recorded. A report is due end March which will be circulated on receipt. **Action: AB**

4 Management Scheme & Action Plan

Noted:

- The long time horizon of the Management Scheme (MS)², the work programme timelines and the requirement for relevant authority ratification to enable public consultation were rehearsed, particularly for newer RA representatives.
- One-to-one meetings to discuss the draft Action Plan had been held with CCC, CCW, PCC and PCNPA; a meeting with DCWW was planned to follow the RAG meeting; a meeting with EAW was scheduled and dates were awaited from CCoS and WAG Marine Branch. The draft is also with WAG Fish and MoD (Defence Estates).
- No major issues had been raised by CCW, PCC or PCNPA.

¹ Completed by e-mail 28 Feb 2011

² The only government guidance on developing MSs: *European Marine Sites in England & Wales. A Guide to the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 and to the Preparation and Application of Management Schemes*. DETR / Welsh Office 1998, states: "A management scheme should be based on a long-term view of management and effects. Experience elsewhere suggests that rolling 25 year plans are an appropriate timescale on which to base the management scheme"

- CCC were concerned about the length and level of detail in the context of gaining member approval. A suggested agreement had been reached that the draft action plan as formatted could become a further technical annex and the key points abstracted and summarised for the MS document.
- It was proposed that the actions be reorganised from a sectoral to a management theme basis; it was noted that this would be a very significant task.
- The action plan as currently constructed is possibly misnamed since the term ‘action plan’ is generally understood to comprise a concise suite of specific, short-term, actions whereas the current draft details long-term (minimum 6 year to coincide with the European reporting schedule), comprehensive management objectives rather than specific actions *per se*.
- A proposal that the entire MS should be no more than a few pages (c 8 – 10) in length, high-level and aspirational rather than including specific detailed management measures prompted a lengthy and vigorous debate.
- The majority of members accepted the need to rationalise and rename the Action Plan as drafted, but robustly defended the MS model that had been agreed and worked toward for several years and the need for the detailed actions identified as necessary to be included within any revised structure.
- The MA and AP as drafted should not be considered or described as the EMSO’s, but are the joint product of the RAG up to this time.
- A management theme (*cf* sectoral) approach was suggested as potentially adding value and generating commitment to dialogue and integration, and could encourage RAs to go beyond their minimum statutory obligations to secure conservation benefit. A minority were of the view that the MS should not include commitments that could be used against RAs, although during further discussion no examples where this had happened were identified.
- The primary audience for the MS is both the RAs themselves *and* competent authorities.
- All but one member agreed that the MS could have a useful role in supporting resource bidding for EMS related work.
- Although public consultation is not a statutory requirement, it is government policy, an agreed RAG principle and widely considered required good practice.

Agreed:

- The detail in the AP as drafted is valuable as part of the audit trail and evidence base for management action and it essential that it be retained as a technical annex; the Severn Estuary MS was cited as an example where this level of detail is contained in an annex. DT to circulate copy. **Action: DT**³
- The document originally planned as the MS’s executive summary will become the MS and the current MS document will, after consequential revision, become the first in a series of technical annexes.
- The MS will include management principles; map and features background; broad responsibilities of RAs; statement of commitment to collaborative working; key pressures on the EMS, management issues and functionally themed measures; collaborative actions;

³ Completed by e-mail 28 Feb 2011

reference to background documents (technical annexes). Constraints to delivery of management measures will be clearly identified.

- MS should be aspirational, a demonstration of collaborative commitment to meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive and achieve the site's conservation objectives; care must be taken to ensure it is not simply words.
- The 'day-job' statutory functions of RAs are part of the EMS management 'tool-kit' and have a legitimate place in the MS in their own right in addition to providing a clear understanding of how each RA functions and contributes to EMS management.
- MS to refer to and be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the dynamism of the changing legislative landscape.

5 Work programme

Agreed:

- Immediate priority is compilation of short-form MS.
- Although difficult to estimate time required for rewrite, attempt to adhere to the existing timeline for preparing the MS on the basis that only the short MS document would require sign-off by the RAs and go out to public consultation and not the supporting, detailed technical annexes ⁴.
- Attempt to adhere to existing timetable for public consultation.
- To confirm website-based consultation only, with hard copies of consultation MS being provided only if specifically requested.
- Cancel Action Plan meeting with EAW; advise WAG Fish and Marine Branch of change in direction. **Action: BB**
- Establish audit trail of RA agreements of ratification for public consultation; all members to provide written agreement at end of internal 'consultation on sign-off for public consultation' (noting that there will be a subsequent requirement for further formal RA approval and ratification prior to the finalisation and launch / release of the post public consultation and potentially amended MS). **Action: ALL**

Noted: depending on the response to the public consultation, it might be possible to shorten the timelines for finalising the MS.

Note: implications for the work programme of related tasks (eg readying website for public consultation; consequential revision of the now former MS text to become technical annex 1) were not discussed.

6 Budget & resources

The current budget synopsis and forecast circulated prior to meeting was considered.

Noted:

⁴ The timetable for the consequential revisions to the existing documents and how or whether they would be ultimately placed in the public domain was not discussed.

- EAW had confirmed a contribution for the current FY. CCW and PCNPA confirmed contributions for 2011-12.
- Inclusion of the 2011-12 contributions plus reduction in MS translation costs (as consequence of only consulting on short-form MS) results in resources estimated to be sufficient to take the RAG to the end of coming financial year (subject to a more rigorous budgeting exercise) on basis of almost nil cost for consultation, production of hard copies of MS, liaison with R&CAs or any other stakeholder engagement.
- CCoS were in the process of extending BB's contract for six months; on basis of the additional contributions DH will arrange for extension to end 2011-2012.
- Written confirmation of contributions requested by CCoS to enable extension of BB's contract.
- BB repeated offer to reduce hours to three days / week.

Agreed:

- reduction in hours unnecessary for the time being; review situation at later date.
- Investigate the translation of MS free of charge by one or other members (recalling that previous enquiries revealed higher rates than could be obtained commercially).

Action: RAs with in-house translation service

7 EMSO report

Noted:

- Minimal time spent on tasks other than Action Plan development and liaison.⁵
- Further liaison with CCW regarding integration of actions between the MS and the Special sites Project Actions database.
- Attended two GEMS meetings (one each phone and video conference): key common issues were resources and CCW review of EMS management.
- Attended CCC Environment Scrutiny Committee addressing Burry Inlet water quality issues. Surprise expressed at number of issues addressed that had not been shared with RAG, specifically EAW development of Burry Inlet cockle fishing management plan. JHg to arrange for contact to be made with BB. **Action: JHg**
- Attended Wales Coastal & Maritime Partnership annual conference the previous day. Conference content of limited value but networking opportunities had been invaluable.

8 RA updates

a) consents & information (confidential)

See confidential annex

⁵ Omitted from report to meeting: comments from CB&E EMS perspective provided to reviews of Gower AONB management plan and PCNPA recreation plan.

b) research & monitoring

Noted:

(AB) Recently circulated Geoff Liles otter report warmly welcomed as a valuable additional source of information, a focus for management action for otters, and an excellent example of an output from collaborative working that would not have happened without the RAG.

(DH) Possibilities of opportunities for the EMS arising from SEACAMS project part-hosted at Swansea University need to be explored. BB to follow up contacts provided by DH. **Action: BB**

9 Other business

None raised.

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

Weds 13 April 10.00 hrs; venue tbc.

Meeting closed at 13.10 hrs