



MINUTES OF MEETING

Monday 12 December 2011

WELSH WILDFOWL CENTRE, PENCLACWYDD, LLANELLI

Present

Jane Hodges (JHs) Chair	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)
Eifion Bowen (EB)	Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC) (from agenda item 8)
Blaise Bullimore (BB)	EMS Officer
Anne Bunker (AB)	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Kate Collins (KC)	Environment Agency Wales (EAW)
Alex Harding (AH)	CCW
Simeon Jones (SJ)	CCC
Eve Read (ER)	Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water (DCWW)
Julia Williams (JW)	Welsh Government Marine Branch

Swansea University SEACAMS team (agenda item 1)

1 SEACAMS presentation

Following a round of introductions, members of the Swansea University SEACAMS team - Ruth Callaway (RC), Chiara Bertelli, Richard Unsworth (marine benthos), Suzanne Grenfell, Anouska Medzil (geomorphology) and Chris Lowe (water quality) - outlined the purpose, funding and timeline for the SEACAMS project (further detail at www.seacams.ac.uk), described recent and current projects and identified the range of partnerships and clients the team has engaged with.

The team identified some possible project ideas for the EMS: *eg* growing eelgrass for restoration purposes; sediment tracing and dynamics in the context of sea level rise and changing fluvial processes; water quality parameter modelling as a decision support tool.

RC briefly described the Burry Inlet symposium held in 1975 and the follow-up conference in 1996, and reported that she and BB had independently had the idea that it may be appropriate for a third conference in the near future. RC reported that preliminary discussions with the Estuarine Coastal Sciences Association (www.ecsa-news.org), who organise regional and site-based conferences across Europe, have resulted in their potential interest in running a Burry Inlet conference in 2013.

The team members were thanked for attending; BB will continue liaison regarding projects and the proposed Burry Inlet conference.

2 Apologies & domestics

Apologies:

Ged Davies	EAW
Deb Hill	City & County of Swansea
John Hogg	EAW
Fergus O'Brien	DCWW
Lindsey Rendle	CCC
Trevor Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council

JHs extended a warm welcome to JW, WG Marine Branch.

Noted: contact has been established with the newly reconstituted Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners (following introduction of the new Saundersfoot Harbour Empowerment Order 2011); BB is awaiting an invitation to address the new Commissioners to introduce them to the EMS and the SHC's responsibilities as a relevant authority under the 2010 Habitats Regulations¹.

Lyndsey Rendle likely to be off work for some time with a persistent back injury.

3 Minutes of meeting 22 September 2011

Agreed without amendment, though *noted* that numbering of items from CCW management review onwards is incorrect (need to be increased by 1).

4 Matters arising from minutes of 22 September 2011 & not on the agenda

Item 4: JEH had written to Mike Camplin; no response yet received. AB to follow up². **Action: AB**

Item 4: all EA actions **carried forward**. KC to liaise with John Hogg regarding presentation to RAG in spring 2012. **Action: KC**

Item 4: no news on extant SO applications – **carry forward**. **Action: AB**

Item 4: DCWW's 'way forward' report still being scrutinised and prioritised. Resources have been allocated for a number of special projects in the current five year programme; wetland establishment remains a possibility.

Item 8: (budget & resources) – letter requesting contributions for 2012-13 drafted and awaiting signatures and sending.

Item 10: (RA updates) – comments on Burry Inlet MoU circulated with agenda. Key issues: inconsistent expression of precise intent of MoU with respect to the EMS; lack of acknowledgement or any integration with the RAG or management scheme.

5 Annual review of RAG ToR and MoU

Subject to updating the reference to the 2010 Habitats Regulations and removing SWSFC as a relevant authority, no amendments identified. **Action: BB**

¹ An invitation has since been received and BB will be giving SHC a presentation on 14 February 2012.

² Scoter monitoring in Carmarthen Bay SPA: there will be only two ground counts in winter 2011-12. A bid has been submitted for four ground counts for next financial year, as this the minimum considered necessary to give an accurate estimation of numbers. There has not been a bid for aerial counts because of the high cost. The 2010/2011 report is appended for information.

6 Management Scheme consultation

BB led members through the responses received to date and circulated in summary prior to the meeting.

Noted:

Carmarthen County Council were the only relevant authority to formally respond to date.

A meeting had been held with EAW to address matters of clarification, phrasing and lead authority for several actions in Technical Annex 3. All identified issues were resolved and amendments returned to EAW for confirmation. Except for requested changes in to the identified lead authority, which involved and were subsequently agreed with CCW, none of the amendments altered the substance of the document.

Two phrasing issues applied to actions common to other authorities; it was agreed to amend phrasing of all relevant actions as appropriate.

MoD have not formally responded but have indicated that the Pendine Integrated Rural Management Plan currently out to consultation (just been received by BB) should align with the measures identified in the MS. However, the Pendine IRMP does not encompass Pembrey issues.

Agreed: BB to pursue overarching response; circulate response to Pendine IRMP consultation prior to submission. **Action: BB**

WG Marine branch will act as focal point for providing WG response, including fisheries response. JW offered to explore options for increased engagement with fisheries, including through WG's Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group (WMFAG) and South Inshore Fisheries Group (IFG).

Action: JW

WG developing internal structure for cross-cutting marine planning group which bridges departments, including fisheries, with lead from Marine Branch.

WG able to regulate previously unregulated activities through Nature Conservation Orders where necessary (under 2009 Marine & Coastal Access Act).

Timing of MS consultation unfortunate as it is related to the CCW MPA management review which is nearly but not yet complete. Outcome from the final review may affect WG's response.

Agreed: A synopsis of all responses should be produced and circulated once all responses have been received. In meantime, a holding response needs to be sent to individuals and organisations that have responded to date. **Action: BB**

Noted: The Chair reminded members that the MS is the RAs own scheme primarily for its own, and competent authority's, purposes; consequently, whilst stakeholder buy-in is important, it is not necessary to extend or repeat the public consultation in addition to resolving outstanding issues from relevant and competent authorities.

Agreed: Timetable for finalisation and adoption of MS not currently possible to determine. Rate of progress lies with relevant authorities, not the RAG or EMS Officer. Aspiration for adoption by next meeting dependent on responses from RAs and WG.

7 CCW MPA management review

Noted:

Review is with senior management for finalising / approval prior to submitting to WG in the new year.

The review was referred to by the First Minister in response to a question by Rebecca Evans AM during First Minister's question in the Senedd on 15 November 2011 ("We intend to play our part in contributing towards an ecologically coherent UK network of well-managed marine protected areas. The Countryside Council for Wales is currently undertaking a review of MPA management in Wales, which is due to report to the Government in the new year.")

EB joined the meeting

8 Fisheries issues

a) Letter to head of Fisheries Unit

Noted:

Draft letter circulated with agenda had been amended to include comments and additions from EB and ER.

Agreed:

Hold off sending for the time being pending further intervention by JW.

Action: JW

In event that JW's effort at intervention does not succeed, letter should be sent as is.

b) Cockle mortality and future management report

Noted:

Draft report had been circulated for comment. BB had commented on sections relating to EMS and its management and on future fisheries management.

The report's headline conclusions are that:

- no single, clear cause of the mortalities has been identified. There may be several causes and that the cause(s) of the initial trigger may differ from the cause(s) of the continuing mortalities;
- populations have gone from an apparently stable population comprising several age classes, to one in which high recruitment produces a fast growing, early and successfully spawning, first-year cohort, most of which dies following spawning;
- there is no evidence to show that pollution in the water or sediment is a cause of mortalities.

The assessment of management section was not well written and the description of obligations arising from Habitats Regulations was poor; the description of nature conservation importance was inconsistent and in places insufficient.

Recommendations for future fisheries management did not appear fully consistent with the conclusions of the report's discussion of management options.

The environmental considerations taken into account in the recommendations appeared limited to the role of cockles as bird prey rather than wider habitat feature considerations.

Although apparently not implicated in cockle mortalities, water quality in the Burry Inlet remains an relevant issue for EMS management and a complaint to the EC alleging breaches of the UWWTD remains live.

Agreed:

It was not possible to have a meaningful discussion of future cockle fisheries management without the fisheries managers present

KC to liaise with Stuart Thomas, EAW, in respect of developing integration between future Burry Inlet cockle fishery management and the MS. **Action: KC**

c) WG Consultation on review of the exceptions to regulations regarding the maximum length of fishing boats in the 0-6nm zone.

Noted:

The consultation is directly relevant to CB&E EMS management as it was in part triggered by the issue of a Devon based vessel fishing up the shore in Carmarthen Bay.

Consultation available at: <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/environmentandcountryside/111110-120202accesinshorefisheries/?lang=en> with a deadline of 2 February 2012.

CCW will be submitting a response

Agreed:

As members will be responding independently there is no requirement for a RAG response.

Any members responding requested to copy to the RAG for information.

Action: all as appropriate

d) Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) projects

Noted: New European Fisheries Fund projects are being initiated to support sustainable development of coastal fishing communities. AB is CCW's representative on the Pembrokeshire FLAG project.

Agreed: EB to determine whether a FLAG is being initiated in Carmarthenshire³.

e) Bird - net interactions west of Rhossili

Noted:

A report of a fishing vessel setting nets close to the beach at Rhossili was received during the consultation period from a member of the Gower Society. A number of dead seabirds (species and numbers not specified) were reported to have been washed up on Rhossili beach soon afterwards.

Enquires to the WG Inshore Fisheries Manager South revealed that the vessel was fishing legally.

CCW were unaware of reports of bird mortalities.

Agreed: CCW should remain vigilant for any indications of bird mortalities from fishing nets.

Action: AB / AH

³ Following the meeting BB was advised through Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum that Carmarthenshire had missed the application window but that a Swansea FLAG was being established.

9 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Agreed: Given that the MS could not yet be adopted, discussion of development of the future work programme would be postponed to the next meeting.

Noted:

The job descriptions of the other Welsh EMS Officers and a table of their key responsibilities and duties had been circulated with the agenda.

A draft revised JD for the CB&E EMSO requested by Deb Hill prior to the meeting was tabled.

Agreed: Draft appeared reasonable basis for future role. A minor addition required to clarify that the overall management of the Officer lies with the RAG and the administrative and contractual line management lies with CCoS as host and employing authority for the officer. **Action: BB**

10 BUDGET & RESOURCES

Noted:

A budget summary and forecast had been circulated with the agenda.

KC advised that EAW will be able to commit a further £3k for FY 2012-13.

Notwithstanding this, the forecast based on the current balance, predicted carry forward and anticipated (though as yet unconfirmed) contributions for 2012-13 is that the RAG will run out of money sometime between August and October 2012 at the latest, depending on whether the EMSO is employed for three or four days /week and assuming no spend at all on MS implementation.

The RAG's absolute minimum budget requirement for the FY 2012-13 is £20,000 if the EMS Officer's time is reduced from four to three days per week and if only sufficient resources are budgeted for basic RAG maintenance tasks – *ie* no management scheme project implementation work requiring expenditure or stakeholder outreach. A more realistic budget requirement to maintain the Site officer at four days per week and provide for some MS implementation tasks is £32,000.

(A revised forecast incorporating EAW's anticipated 2012-13 contribution is appended.)

Budgetary decisions for FY 2012-13 by the other member authorities will not be finalised until early in the new year.

CCW's MPA management review report to WG will be made public in due course following receipt by WG, but its timing will likely be too late to influence resource allocation decisions for the coming FY.

Possible sources of additional funding were discussed, noting that these would not replace the requirement for core funding.

Agreed: funding request letters over the joint signatures of the Chair and CCoS need to be despatched to all member authorities immediately. **Action: BB / JHs / DH**

11 EMSO REPORT

Noted:

Following a further extension in September, BB's contract currently expires at the end of March 2012 (with three working week's leave to be taken prior to that date if not further extended).

Attended one of the Atlantic Array wind-farm public consultation drop-in events. Identified lack of contact with RAG. Received an apology and was advised the RAG were on the list for contacting. Contact details provided.

Contact has been established with Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners; awaiting a date to make presentation on EMS and MS.

Attended NEF workshop convened by *Natur* (Welsh Institute of Countryside and Conservation Management) 12 October. Noted that a “series of pilot projects” are being planned to “test the new approach locally” and that the Burry Inlet has been proposed as a pilot; though what is being tested and what the pilots are for is as yet unclear. No further information has been sourced.

Agreed: invite Diana Reynolds (WG) or Fiona Evans (CCW) to RAG meeting after next when NEF Green Paper should be out for public consultation. **Action: BB**

Noted:

Attended EAW cockle mortality report workshop and provided comments on the parts of report relating directly to the EMS and future management recommendations (draft report was more than 360 pages; only the most relevant sections were read)

Comments provided on Penclawdd Flood Alleviation Scheme at request of Deb Hill.

Introductory meeting with Lily Pauls, CCW, Mike Camplin’s replacement.

Liaison meeting between EMS and Wales Environment Link marine officers.

Alun Davies, Deputy Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries, statement to Assembly Common Fisheries Policy task and finish group on Senedd TV: fisheries policy objectives exist within the framework provided by the Marine Framework Strategy and the Habitats and Birds Directives; useful confirmation of Ministerial view for informing dialogue with WG Fisheries Unit.

12 RA UPDATES

None reported.

13 RSPB Futurescapes

Noted:

Briefing documents circulated with agenda.

BB met RSPB Cymru’s Futurescapes Project Manager, Three Rivers Area Project manager and funding officer on 21 November. BB provided a detailed briefing on the EMS and the management scheme. RSPB staff provided a brief on the Futurescapes project structure and high level aspirations, which include a specific aim to help and support in the delivery of Habitats Directive objectives. RSPB has been in dialogue with CCW, EAW and CCC.

Agreed:

CCW and EAW members to determine where contact has been made and to ensure appropriate integration is developed with RAG (main CCC contact Isabel Macho). **Action: AB, AH, KC**

Liaison with the RAG by the project team is important. Invite relevant RSPB staff to brief RAG at an appropriate future meeting. **Action: BB**

14 OTHER BUSINESS

Noted:

Pembrokeshire Marine SAC RAG are proposing to hold a 'hearts & minds' EMS awareness raising event for AMs in spring 2012; an invitation has been extended for CB&E EMS to participate.

Agreed: accept invitation. BB to liaise with Sue Burton.

Action: BB

Noted:

Changes arising from the creation of a Single Environmental Body may include transfer of marine licensing functions to the SEB from WG.

Consultation on the first iteration of proposals for Marine Conservation Zones is scheduled for early 2012 but avoiding NEF Green Paper launch / consultation.

The 2012 WCMP annual conference is scheduled for 15 March on the theme of MPA management so will be particularly relevant to EMS RAGs.

Strangford Lough infraction case - pdf of BBC news item circulated with agenda.

The Milford Haven Harbourmaster, deputy chair of the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC RAG, had encountered difficulties with WG Fisheries Unit over proposed Port Authority anchoring management measures in Milford Haven to meet an action identified in the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC Management Scheme. He intends seeking a meeting with Graham Rees, WG Fisheries, to address the problems caused by poor communication with the Fisheries Unit and will extend an invitation to the CB&E RAG to participate if he is successful in arranging a meeting.

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

10.00 Thursday 23 February 2012, WWT Penclacwydd

Key agenda items:

- MS consultation / adoption
- Future work programme
- Resources / EMS Officer contract

Meeting closed at 15.25