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## **MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Thursday 23 February 2012**

**WELSH WILDFOWL CENTRE, 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)
Kate Collins (KC)	Environment Agency Wales (EAW)
Alex Harding (AH)	CCW
Deb Hill (DH)	City & County of Swansea
Simeon Jones (SJ)	Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC)
Isabel Macho (IM)	CCC
Eve Read (ER)	Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water (DCWW)
Trevor Theobald (TT)	Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC)
Julia Williams (JW)	Welsh Government, Marine Branch
Stuart Thomas (ST)	EAW (agenda item 2)
John Thomas (JT)	CCC, Snr Development Manager (agenda item 2)

### **1 Welcome, apologies & domestics**

Apologies:

Eifion Bowen	CCC
John Hogg	EAW
Fergus O'Brien	DCWW
Lindsey Rendle	CCC

### **2 Burry Inlet cockle mortality report**

Stuart Thomas, cockle mortality investigation project manager, was welcomed by members.

ST recapped the history of the mortalities and the scientific investigations into the causes. The final report of the most recent and comprehensive study had been released in January and circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The long time scale for the report's production (extended by one year from the forecast two year programme) was a result of the complexity of the issue and the (anticipated) absence of a single clear cause for the mortalities.

The report focuses on events and data gathering in 2009-10 on which the findings are based as there was insufficient systematically and specifically collected data from prior to this time to form firm opinions of the nature and causes of the mortalities which were recorded from 2002.

The report concludes that:

- there is no single factor clearly identifiable as the cause of the mortalities;
- several factors have been linked with the mortalities including overcrowding, parasite loadings and loss of energy reserves after spawning;
- whilst there are elevated nutrient levels in the Burry Inlet, there is no evidence to suggest these or other water and sediment quality factors are implicated in cockle mortalities. (ST acknowledged that this finding did not imply that there are no water quality issues in Burry Inlet that need to be addressed outside the context of the cockle mortalities.)

The report also notes:

- the population has shifted from a four year age structure to a single year;
- there is some evidence of improved survival in one year old cockles;
- the former population structure may become re-established over time or the current structure may become the new stable state.

The report includes a review of previous management and future fishery management options.

A more evidence-based approach to management has already been introduced.

The clear overlap between a future fishery management plan and the Management Scheme and the need for fisheries management to contribute to meeting the conservation objectives were noted.

ST reported that EAW are keen to involve the RAG in decisions on future management and the EAW's undertaking to consult the RAG on management plan was noted. The Burry Inlet Management Advisory Group (BIMAG) includes representatives from several RAG members, though most of the representatives are not directly involved in the RAG or the EMS's management. BB and ST to liaise further regarding closer RAG involvement with the BIMAG. **Action: BB / ST**

Following thanks, ST left the meeting; JT thanked the RAG for the opportunity to attend and also left.

### **3) Minutes of meeting Monday 12 December 2011**

Agreed without amendment.

### **4 Matters arising from minutes of 12 December 2011 & not on the agenda**

*Item 4:* BB to forward list of outstanding EAW actions to KC. **Action: BB**

*Item 4:* CCW have advised the smaller proposed Several Order is unlikely to have significant effect on the site but that the larger one is likely to have significant nature conservation implications.

*Item 11:* Diana Reynolds, WG Business Change Manager for 'Living Wales', is willing to attend next RAG meeting to brief members. BB to confirm invitation. **Action: BB**

*Item 12:* The judicial review had rejected the claim that the Habitats and UWWT Directives had not been appropriately applied; the applicants have appealed.

*Item 13:* Futurescapes area has been expanded with encouragement from CCW; EAW contact is Mike Jenkins (Cross Hands office); otherwise project appears to have gone quiet. BB to follow up with John Clark, RSPB Futurescapes manager. **Action: BB**

*Item 14:* BB to continue liaison with Sue Burton regarding any future Pembrokeshire Marine SAC awareness raising event for elected members. **Action: BB**

*Noted:*

(JW) Marine licensing *will* be transferred to the new Single Body proposed under ‘Living Wales’.

(JW) The first round of the MCZ consultation has been postponed to mid April.

(JW) The WCMP conference has been postponed, likely to June.

(JW) Workshops to inform responses to the ‘Living Wales’ Green Paper consultation are being held by *Natur* on 29 February (JHs and BB attending) and by WCMP at the end of March.

## **5 Management Scheme**

*Noted:*

DCWW – written (e-mail) agreement received, subject to the caveat that there may be points of detail that DCWW may not necessarily agree with in isolation, and noting that there will always be updates that need to be made.

CCoS – cabinet has accepted MS.

PCC – a request has been submitted to Corporate Management Team requesting formal agreement.

EAW – formal agreement awaited from Area Manager, no problem anticipated.

CCW – content to “sign up in principle to the CBE Management Scheme, recognising it as an aspirational document that provides a useful context for the actions of Relevant Authorities. CCW's in-principle sign up will be re-evaluated once the new Single Body is in place and/or WG begin implementation of CCW recommendations for a strategic MPA management framework for Wales.”

CCW stressed their agreement had been as a ‘sign up’ to the MS on the basis that it is a dynamic process, rather than a ‘sign off’ which would imply that it is a static document without the opportunity for development; CCW recommended that all RAG members consider approval of the MS in this way to eliminate difficulties in gaining agreement.

BB had given a presentation to the Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners covering the background of the Habitats Directive, the RAG and the development of the MS. They were invited to respond to the consultation and to attend RAG meetings.

Nothing further had been heard from MoD. *Agreed* BB should make one further attempt to secure a response. **Action: BB**

A Pembrey Conservation Group meeting is planned for 11 April; IM to seek an invitation for BB to attend in an attempt to stimulate a response. **Action: IM**

WG – attempts to arrange an presentation to relevant WG departments with a view to gaining agreement for sign-up are ongoing. BB to liaise with JW. **Action JW / BB**

Multiple other current developments, *eg* Marine Spatial Planning, ‘Living Wales’ Green Paper, CFP reform, WG departmental restructuring, are likely to influence the policy landscape but the need to move forward with adopting the MS is recognised.

*Agreed:*

Once all RAs and WG have signed up the RAG will consider the MS to be adopted.

Following adoption, the MS document will be amended to include agreed amendments, recirculated to all relevant and competent authorities and posted on the website; there will not be any formal launch event.

## 6 CCW MPA management review

*Noted:*

Outputs now planned to be an overview report on existing MPA (*ie* EMS) management which will be widely circulated as a CCW Science report after the end of March, and a concise formal advice document specifically directed to the WG. The advice document is being presented to the CCW-WG MPA Project Board for agreement on 14 March, thereafter it will be submitted to CCW Directors Team for approval, prior to being submitted to WG. The overview report will not be released until after the advice has been submitted.

Consideration of CCW's previous proposal for an overarching all Wales MPA management group is being postponed until after the establishment of the new Single Body.

## 7 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

*Noted:*

Additional to general RAG support tasks and working on the Management Scheme, the only specific MS related task being undertaken is development of Actions Guidance Notes (following request from CCC).

Guidance notes will not be distributed prior to adoption of the MS; will focus on risk management; and will not be prescriptive.

Key RAG tasks that need to be considered, prioritised and built into the future work programme include:

- Rolling out implementation of the MS by RAs & CAs, with the EMSO supporting RAG members and encouraging CAs;
- Public engagement;
- Stakeholder (= user) engagement;
- Data / information gap filling.

Additional potential tasks include engagement in the RSPB Futurescapes project; developing the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC plans & projects consents mapping project for CB&E; developing and engaging in one or more of the project proposals presented by the Swansea University SEACAMS team (circulated prior to the meeting).

*Agreed:*

The selection of tasks will need to be driven by costs of implementation and available budget.

Postpone detailed discussion until next meeting when budget position should be clearer.

Recirculate the prioritised list of actions assigned to the RAG abstracted from MS Technical Annex 3 (Long term management objectives and actions) previously circulated prior to the last meeting.

**Action: BB**

All to forward proposals and priorities to BB for collation and circulation.

**Action: ALL**

## 8 BUDGET & RESOURCES

*Noted:*

Members were referred to the paper summarising current budget situation, future contributions and budget and expenditure scenarios for the next FY circulated with agenda.

The paper was based on the three committed contributions for next FY to date (DCWW, EAW and PCNPA).

CCW will almost certainly contribute but CCW reps were unable to confirm how much.

WG reported that they had been advised by CCW that CCW's contribution will be £10k (as it will be to all RAGs equally).

CCC had provisionally indicated that they may be able to contribute late this FY for carrying forward to next FY. EB had sent request that DH get in touch to pursue. **Action: DH**

The care and maintenance options allow no budget for implementation of any tasks requiring resources. Resources could be husbanded by reducing the EMSO's working week although, even allowing for a £10k contribution from CCW, insufficient resources will be available to maintain the EMSO in post through the whole of the FY if any budget is targeted toward implementation tasks.

(Revised budget and options forecast is appended for information).

*Agreed:*

The EMSO should not devote time to tracking down potential funding sources but should take advantage of opportunities that arise, *eg* CCoS Rural Development Plan resources for interpretation.

CCoS to extend EMSO contract at current 4 days / week for 3 months; review at next meeting with view to reduction in working week.

## 9 Fisheries issues

### *a) Letter to Graham Rees*

*Noted:* JW had no further news regarding WG Fisheries engagement with EMS issues.

*Agreed:* Chair to send previously drafted letter to Graham Rees. **Action: JHs / BB**

### *b) Burry Inlet cockle fishery management*

Presentation and commitment for EAW engagement with RAG noted. BB to attend Burry Inlet Stakeholder Forum on 8 March and to report outcome of liaison with Stuart Thomas regarding involvement with BIMAG to next meeting.

## 10 EMSO REPORT

Item postponed as time was pressing. See Annex for items that would have been reported.

## 11 RA UPDATES

*Noted:* Three River cockle beds remain closed until the end of March.

## 12 OTHER BUSINESS

(TT) PCC had recently appointed a new LBAP officer (3 days / week)

(KC) Personnel changes in EAW: John Hogg has been seconded to working on development of the new Single Body ('Living Wales'); backfilled / replaced by Pete Jordan, formerly Carmarthenshire Environment Management Team Leader.

(JW) WG Marine Branch have policy lead for marine pollution incidents.

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

10.00 Wednesday 16 May 2012, WWT Penclacwydd.

*Key agenda items:*

Diana Reynolds 'Living Wales' Green Paper presentation

Budget and resources

Forward work programme

Members should plan for a long meeting (room booked to 15.00)

As the May meeting will have a full agenda request RSPB Futurescapes presentation at subsequent meeting **Action: BB**

Meeting closed at 13.05

## **EMSO REPORT**

Additional to issues discussed in the meeting:

BB had taken some leave but still has two weeks to taken before the end of March.

Presentation to and meeting with Saundersfoot Harbour Commissioners.

Response to Pendine Range Integrated Rural Management Plan submitted.

Website updated.

Attended 'Living Wales' meeting with WG convened by Natur.

EMS RAG mgmt case study submitted.

Continued liaison with SEACAMS regarding project proposals.

Catching up with some of the backlog of reading and electronic filing which had accumulated during development of MS and consultation.

### ***Forthcoming***

Attending NATUR 'Living Wales' conference on 28 February.

Deputising for Sue Burton, Pembs Marine SAC, at South Inshore Fisheries Group meeting on 29 February

GEMS meeting 29 February