



MINUTES OF MEETING

Thursday 15 November 2012

WELSH WILDFOWL CENTRE, PENCLACWYDD, LLANELLI

Present

Jane Hodges (JH) Chair	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)
Eifion Bowen	Carmarthenshire County Council (CCC)
Blaise Bullimore (BB)	EMS Officer
Anne Bunker (AB)	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Alex Harding (AH)	CCW
Jill Howells (JHs)	Environment Agency Wales (EAW) Biodiversity Officer
Simeon Jones (SJ)	CCC
Isabel Macho (IM)	CCC
Eve Read (ER)	Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water (DCWW)
Jon Willington (JWn)	EAW, Carmarthenshire Environmental Management Team Leader
John Clark (JC)	RSPB Futurescapes Manager Wales

1 Welcome, apologies & domestics

Apologies:

Deb Hill	City & County of Swansea
Dave Tavner	EAW
Trevor Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council
Julia Williams	Welsh Government, Marine Branch

John Clark was welcomed by the Chair and introductions were made.

Members extended their best wishes to Kate Collins on the recent birth of a baby girl.

2 RSPB Futurescapes presentation

JC provided members with an introduction to the Futurescapes project, with an emphasis on the Three Rivers Futurescape area and a summary of the aspirations for the area. A pdf of JC's presentation is appended as an annex.

Noted:

- Clear potential links with the CB&E management scheme.
- Futurescapes boundary is "fuzzy" and will not constrain project or partnership working.
- Futurescapes will not duplicate other projects but aspires to support and add value.

- A part time Three Rivers project officer is scheduled to be recruited to support the South Wales Area Manager, Cellan Michael.

Information leaflets and newsletters available at: <http://www.rspb.org.uk/futurescapes/>

Agreed:

- RAG would welcome a seat on the Three Rivers project steering group.
- BB to liaise with JC regarding steering group, Futurescapes project audit and advising on important features and actions from the EMS perspective. **Action: BB**
- JC to forward Futurescapes boundary GIS layer. **Action: JC**
- RAG look forward to working closely with Futurescapes project.

Members thanked JC who left the meeting at c.11.15.

3) Annual (re)appointment Chair & Vice-chair

BB took chair temporarily. Nominations / re-nominations were requested. JH reappointed as Chair and Deb Hill as Vice-Chair.

JH resumed chair.

4) Minutes of meeting 16 May 2012

Agreed subject to correction of minor typing errors and the correction of numbering of the last five items.

5 Matters arising from minutes of 16 May 2012 & not on the agenda

Item 5: Pembrey Conservation Group are next scheduled to meet in April 2013. IM will liaise with BB at that time and request an item on the agenda.

Item 7: No news on Julia Williams' planned discussion about resources with CCW.

Item 8: No news on Julia Williams' plan to liaise further with WG Fish ¹.

Noted: WG Fish staff had recently attended a WG / CCW training workshop on Habitats Regulations Assessment provided by David Tyldesley contracted by CCW (AB had also attended).

6 Annual review of MoU and ToR

MoU and ToR both reconfirmed.

7 CCW MPA management review

Noted:

- CCW's advice letter to WG and underpinning review reports were circulated to members on 28 Aug 2012. Nothing new or further to report. Progress seems stalled because of, *inter alia*, WG's MCZ project and the CCW transition to Natural Resources Wales.

¹ BB since followed up by phone and, at JW's request, by e-mail.

- SPA extensions are in play in other EMS, including Pembrokeshire Marine SAC, and these also appear to be delayed because of the MCZ project.
- Efforts to further integrate the MS with the Special Sites Database have continued; a meeting was held with CCW to identify fisheries priority actions.
- CCW have secured funding from the EU LIFE programme for a project to develop a project for the management and restoration of *Natura 2000* in Wales. Jen Kelly, currently Cardigan Bay SAC Officer, has been appointed as marine coordinator on a two year contract.

8 The future of CB&E EMS RAG

Noted:

- Budget summary, funding document and work programme priorities discussion paper circulated with agenda.
- BB had decreased his working week to 2.5 days / week with effect from 1 July; contract currently extends to end March 2013. CCoS are unable to further renew contract for a period longer than committed resources are available.
- As a consequence of reduction in EMSO hours, no spend on anything other than minimal essentials, and a late contribution from CCoS for last FY, the carry forward to next year is forecast to be c. £7500. However:
 - travel costs are running over budget because of essential liaison with members;
 - members were unclear about the CCoS contribution for 2011-12 and any possible further contribution this FY. Clarification from CCoS was requested. BB to follow up with Deb Hill and include as specific agenda item for next meeting. **Action: BB and (DH)**
- Only DCWW and PCNPA have commitments for 2013-14 giving an anticipated budget of c.£9 – 10,000 without further contributions, *ie* sufficient for c.6 months extension for the EMS Officer at the current work-week.
- The effect on budget contributions of CCW and EAW functions being taken over by Natural Resources Wales is unknown at present.

Agreed:

- Maintaining an officer in post is essential.
- Next meeting needs to be held sufficiently before the end of the FY to enable decisions to be made about continuation into 2013-14.
- All members need to maintain pressure within their parent organisations for securing resource contributions. **Action: ALL**

Noted:

- The short term options paper circulated with agenda lists more tasks than can be achieved within the time available, despite many necessary tasks being identified as not for action.
- RAG membership is likely to change as NRW comes on stream. The views of the new body as to the detail in the management scheme and action plan are unknown.
- Many actions require resources to some degree, even if only to cover the cost of travel.

Agreed:

- Priority must be given to tasks that deliver most added value for least (preferably nil) cost; action should be proactive rather than simply reactive as far as possible to help demonstrate added value.
- Current tasks additional to RAG support and liaison, *eg* MS Guidance Notes and developing a volunteer activity recording scheme (with SJ), were endorsed.
- BB's suggestions of contributing to other relevant existing initiatives, *eg* CCoS Countryside Connections and Futurescapes, and providing support for EMS work within authorities, *eg* contributing to staff training and awareness raising (CCoS), as priorities.
- Collaborative work (*eg* with other EMS Officers) for Wales-wide issues that affect the Site and independent work to address Site-specific issues need to be carefully balanced; collaborative working was endorsed where there are advantages to be gained.
- A brief report on the management scheme consultation should be prepared as there is an need for feedback to local authorities at least. **Action: BB**
- The EMSO should guide members as to priority tasks.
- Maintain the task list in the options paper as a working document for the time being.

9 Fisheries issues

Noted:

- Responses to the WG cockle management and EAW Burry Inlet Regulating Order management plan consultations had been circulated with the agenda. No comments on draft responses had been submitted by members; responses had been submitted by BB with agreement from the Chair.
- BB provided a short briefing on Burry Inlet management from Dave Tavner (EAW): management plan consultation closed 27 Sept; 73% response from license holders (following much encouragement); a mix of welcome and dislike of the proposals. Next steps are collation and accommodation of comments, followed by review of proposals with EAW fisheries and legal staff before presenting proposals to Minister early in new year. A number of prosecutions of unlicensed gathering are ongoing. No problems with licensed gatherers have been experienced by DT since he came to post.
- AH attended recent Burry Inlet Management Advisory Group (BIMAG) meeting. A request from a cockle picker representative for introduction of hydraulic dredging was met with opposition from most other industry representatives but support from some.

10 Wildfowling at Llanrhidian

Noted:

- Letter from EMS neighbours circulated with agenda.
- Becky Wright (CCW) had liaised with National Trust who had, in turn, been in liaison with the wildfowling club involved. The situation was reported as improving.

11 Problems of Small Estuaries Symposium: Swansea University, April 2013

Noted:

- Advance announcement of the Symposium was circulated with agenda.
- This symposium follows on from symposia held in 1976 and 1995

Agreed:

- The EMS should have a presence.
- BB to continue to liaise with the organisers.

Action: BB

12 EMS Officer report

Changes to EMSO contract discussed at agenda item 8.

Because of shortness of time recent EMSO activities to be added as annex to minutes.

Noted:

- Following recent concern (resulting from the backlash CCW had experienced following the WG's MCZ consultation) about possible misunderstanding of CCW involvement with GEMS, a Terms of Reference for GEMS had been drafted (circulated with agenda). Members were asked for comment and endorsement.
- Some members also had superseded copies of the ToR from other EMSOs which caused confusion.
- Members were asked for comment on the degree to which they would be content for EMS Officers to work collaboratively and to jointly represent the views of their RAGs.
- Whilst concern was expressed that GEMS may act as an (independent) "lobby group", this was not the intention.
- EMSOs have been liaising closely together and with CCW over resources, integration with the Special Sites Database and awareness raising.

Agreed:

- Members content with ToR.
- Joint responses to consultations etc or other joint outputs from GEMS to be agreed by RAG.

Noted:

Draft EMS funding document, with a target audience of relevant authorities and WG Marine Branch, had been circulated with agenda. Intended to further revise to accentuate positive outputs by RAGs and EMSOs. No further comment received from members.

13 Relevant authority updates

Noted:

The Atlantic Array wind farm project has been scaled down (fewer turbines and smaller footprint)².

JWn left the meeting at 12.50; EB left at 13.00

² See: <http://tinyurl.com/cufr6kv> and <http://www.rwe.com/web/cms/en/86182/rwe-innogy/news-press/press/?pmid=4008589>

CCW reports on birds - fisheries interactions were circulated to members in early November.

CCW had carried out monitoring of the salt-marsh feature in-house to inform the current N2K reporting round. Three Rivers salt-marshes were in mostly good condition. Parts of Burry Inlet marshes were over-grazed and possibly affected by local nutrient enrichment from grazing animal droppings. A large number of signs of otters had been recorded.

Photographs from CCW salt-marsh monitoring at Laugharne and macrobenthic sampling in the Three Rivers were shown by BB.

CCW's annual monitoring programme had also included intertidal sediments with an emphasis on wetland bird prey availability.

DCWW is inviting ideas for research projects and/or investigations into emergent issues in environmental science or catchment level issues to help DCWW understand the sensitivity of environmental receptors to better enable development of appropriate abstraction and treatment solutions.

14 Other business

None raised.

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

10.00hrs Tuesday 5 February 2013

Key agenda items:

Finance & resources

Future of EMSO contract

Meeting closed at 13.50

Annex 1: EMS Officer activity since last meeting additional to main work items covered in minutes.

PM SAC site visit for AMs & MPs, end May. (Last minute cancellation by South Pembs & Carmarthen West AM but valuable dialogue Steve Brown, EAW, on management scheme).

MFSD workshop (CCW).

WCMP Conference 5 July 2012.

CCoS Countryside Connections – mtg / site visit / prep material.

MS Actions Guidance Notes – mtg IB.

Volunteer activity recording: preparation of maps and recording proforma; 2 mtgs with SJ but mtg with Rangers cancelled.

Regular liaison EMSOs – resources - funding document, common issues.

Liaison CCW fisheries priorities to SSD.

Liaison Colin Charman CCW Marine Fisheries Advisor.

WG Future of cockle mgmt consultation response.

EAW BICRO mgmt plan consultation response.

WBP Marine Ecosystem Group (MEG) meeting.

Contribution to BAP MEG habitats and species targets.

ERDF project assessment.

Respond to Swansea FLAG consultation.

Comment on CCoS Environment Strategy review.

Input to CCoS MCZ consultation response.

KWT / Visit Wales beach management toolkit mtg.

Deputise for SB at IFG Oct 2012 (contribute to SB for review IFGs, input to WFS review).

Respond to WG Fish legislative review via Sue Burton, as IFG representative.

Liaison Nick O’Sullivan, Chair Wales Marine Fisheries Advisory Group.