



MINUTES OF MEETING

Tuesday 5 February 2013

WELSH WILDFOWL CENTRE, 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
Jill Howells (JHo)	Environment Agency Wales (EAW) Biodiversity Officer
Eve Read (ER)	Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water (DCWW)
Lindsey Rendle (LR)	CCC
Trevor Theobald (TT)	Pembrokeshire County Council
Jon Willington (JWn)	EAW, Carmarthenshire Environmental Management Team Leader
Julia Williams (JWs)	Welsh Government, Marine Branch

1) Welcome, apologies & domestics

Apologies:	Simeon Jones	CCC
	Isabel Macho	CCC
	Dave Tavner	EAW
	Bill Somerfield	Welsh Government, Fisheries Unit

LR was welcomed back after her prolonged sick leave.

2) Minutes of meeting 15 November 2012

Accepted without amendment.

3) Matters arising from minutes of 15 November 20 & not on the agenda

Item 2 - Futurescapes: BB in liaison with John Clark, RSPB.

Item 9 - Fisheries: BB gave a brief update on Burry Inlet cockle management provided by Dave Tavner, EAW. Consultation responses have been collected but no further work done as yet because of staff capacity. A number of prosecutions for cockling without a license have recently resulted in guilty verdicts for seven individuals and a further 4 or 5 prosecutions are scheduled for February.

Item 13a: Action for **EB** to forward Stradey Park judicial review decision carried forward.

4) Management Scheme consultation report

Noted: Two drafts had been circulated for comment and a final draft circulated for confirmation of agreement. CCW, DCWW, PCNPA and WG Marine Branch had provided nil returns; no other responses were received.

Agreed:

Both the RAG (long) and web (short) versions were agreed. Members should use whichever version agreement they consider most appropriate for their needs.

Add paragraph numbers to both versions.

Action: BB

Both versions should be translated for dissemination. BB to liaise with JWs regarding translation.

Action: BB

5) Update on NRW in context of EMS

Noted:

Chief Executive and senior directors recruited but middle management roles not yet allocated or recruited.

It is not yet clear where specific functions will fall in NRW. However, CCW & EAW officers anticipate RAG representation will continue unchanged for some time though will be reviewed at some future point.

Financial management is the only function expected to change immediately on creation of NRW.

Marine licensing will move to NRW; existing WG staff are not transferring; new staff have been recruited and are undergoing training by the current licensing team.

A useful briefing note on working with NRW for partners and customers is available on the WG website ¹.

The Environment Minister had publicly promised continuation of business as usual. Since RAGs have a statutory foundation, albeit they are not obligatory, it was hoped that their continuity was assured pending decisions emerging from the CCW MPA review.

Both CCW and EAW officers have notified appropriate colleagues of the need to make resource bids for continued RAG contributions, however the decision makers have not yet been identified or appointed.

WG Marine Branch is conscious of the inherent risks to the Welsh Government, as the relevant Competent Authority, in failing to meet Habitats Directive requirements and is giving attention to the need for continued management of EMS.

JWs offered to ask the Head of Nature, Access and Marine Unit, Chris Lea, to raise as a priority the requirement for RAG funding for next FY with NRW.

Action: JWs

6) The future of CB&E EMS RAG

a) Budget & resources

Budget summary and forecast as at 31 January 2013 was circulated prior to meeting.

¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/consmanagement/nef/publications/seb/customers-suppliers-partners/?lang=en>

Noted:

DH confirmed the CCoS contribution for 2011-12 (*nb: not 2012-13*) was £5k, reducing the draw down from reserves in April 2012, leaving a reserve which helped carry the RAG through the current FY.

An additional contribution of £1500 for the current FY will be made by CCC.

A bid has been submitted in the event of an end of year under-spend in PCC. Pembrokeshire Marine SAC is main focus for PCC's attention making it difficult to reinstate a contribution for this Site.

CCoS make an annual contribution in kind by hosting the EMS Officer and administering the budget.

DCWW and PCNPA have made commitments for 2013-14.

CCW's contributions differ substantially between RAGs.

Agreed: contributions should be strategically planned and equitable.

The estimated carry forward to 2013-14 was recalculated as approximately £9500, giving an anticipated budget of c.£12k without further contributions, *ie* sufficient for c.9 months extension for the EMS Officer at the current work-week but with no project budget for MS implementation.

b) Budget requirement

The absolute minimum budget needed to maintain EMSO at 2.5 days / week including essential RAG maintenance costs only is c.£15,530.

A realistic working budget at 2.5 days / week with a modest implementation / project budget is c.£23k (the budget for a full time (or equivalent) EMSO with a realistic implementation / project budget, c.£45-50k *per annum*).

c) Medium term future for RAG & EMSO

The context for longer term EMS management was discussed at length.

Noted:

The context is unclear until WG have the time to fully consider and take account of the CCW MPA management review.

The imminent dissolution of CCW and EAW and creation of Natural Resources Wales makes planning for the future difficult.

WG will be looking toward NRW to take the lead for MPA management, though detailed discussion is yet to be held and NRW's future role in this context remains unresolved.

There are anticipated to be more high level, shared, partnership outcomes identified between WG and NRW by 2014.

The CCW Special Sites Database will continue to play an important role.

The NAW marine policy inquiry report is anticipated to make a valuable contribution to raising the profile of marine management; WG are required to respond formally usually within six weeks of publication.

It is important that the WG focus on the ecosystem approach does not result in an unacceptably reduced focus on sites management and the need for the management review, given EMS

management is at an ecosystem scale and the emphasis in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive of the importance of EMS to the MPA network.

Failing to implement EMS management adequately carries corporate risks for WG (of infraction by the EC) and relevant authorities. Loss of an EMSO increases this risk as it would cause the RAG to become ineffective.

These uncertainties affect all RAGs.

Agreed: contact and invite WG's ecosystem work lead, Steve Spode, to liaise and engage with RAG(s). **Action: BB / JWs**

An options paper was tabled for discussion. Four options for continuation of the RAG and EMSO were considered at length:

- 1) Maintain *status quo*, noting that without additional resources for 2013-14 even this cannot be funded to the end of the FY. *Agreed:* a preferred option but risk of running out of funds part way through year and having to cease work.
- 2) Increase the work programme and restore EMSO to a longer working week. *Agreed:* desirable but not currently realistic for serious consideration.
- 3) Downgrade the work to care and maintenance, decreasing the EMSO working week to eke out known resources. *Agreed:* an acceptable option if minimal decrease allows continuity to end of FY; cost exact options for 12 months; reconsider and reinstate as and when resources permit.
- 4) Discontinue employing EMSO altogether and allow the RAG to become moribund. *Agreed:* unacceptable.

Agreed: essential to maintain RAG active and officer in post to ensure momentum.

The RAG's priority objectives were also discussed at length.

Agreed - highest priority:

- 1) Maintain RAG as an adequately resourced partnership between the responsible authorities, implementing the management scheme, particularly collaborative joint actions.
- 2) Maintain collaboration and liaison between RA members.
- 3) Increase integration of EMS management requirements into routine RA functions.
- 4) Improve engagement with CAs, particularly WG, and build their awareness of EMS conservation management requirements.
- 5) Continue to identify issues for inclusion in the CCW Special Sites Actions Database and improve liaison with CCW over identification of EMS management needs.
- 6) Build cooperative, mutually beneficial, relationship with Futurescapes project.

High priority:

- 7) Begin to plug most important information gaps identified during MS process; specifically focussing on improving knowledge of potential pressure activities.
- 8) Monitor management action by management authorities relevant to the EMS and its efficacy, and feed back to the management authorities (*ie* MS implementation self review).

Secondary priority:

- 9) Increase profile of EMS and its management requirements amongst stakeholders / users (& public).

10) Continue to increase and maintain corporate profile of EMS within member RAs; subject to implementation of CCW management review recommendations, continue to promote the RAG and EMSO as a cost effective and efficient model for integration and coordination of EMS management.

Agreed:

EMSO to keep these and other objectives under review and advise RAs as priorities need revision.

Reissued work programme options paper reaffirmed as working document for the time being.

d) Future of EMSO contract

Agreed: renew EMSO contract at 2 days / week for 6 months; review after 6 months or before if budget improves sufficiently.

Action: DH

e) GEMS funding document

Noted:

BB summarised the background to the document's development.

Some members expressed concern that it read more as a lobbying document than providing a rationale for continued resourcing of EMS Officers.

Agreed:

The language needs to be revised to focus on: EMSOs and RAGs being an existing solution to helping address the recommendations in the NAW Environment & Sustainability's *Inquiry into marine policy in Wales* report; outcomes (the outputs examples text box was endorsed); the need for dedicated site officers to undertake the work of supporting relevant authorities in delivering their MPA management responsibilities. The document needs to be more concise.

The document should be directed to WG (Director Environment & Sustainable Development), copied to Marine Branch, Natural Resources Wales and other RAs etc.

Action: BB to liaise with Sue Burton

8) Problems of Small Estuaries Symposium: Swansea University, April 2013

Draft EMS presentation summary circulated with agenda. *Agreed* subject to deletion of fisheries example.

Examples of RAG outputs to secure FCS requested from members.

Agreed:

Include otter survey, collaborative working to plug evidence gaps; possibly fisheries management which benefits the EMS and / or MoU depending on the other presentations planned for the Symposium.

Determine subject of other relevant presentations and make appropriate cross references.

Action: BB

9) EMS Officer report

Noted: recent work focussed on Management Scheme Guidance Notes, liaison with GEMS, particularly concerning resources, and exploring resource possibilities.

10) Relevant authority updates

EAW undertaking “hotspot surveys” for faecal indicator organisms in feeder catchments in respect of Shellfish Waters Directive requirements. In liaison with DCWW.

EAW and DCWW developing integrated monitoring for Drinking Water Safety Plans.

Water Framework Directive monitoring results for 2012 show that Carmarthen Bay is moderate status, Three Rivers is poor and Loughor Estuary is bad because of Dissolved Available Inorganic Nitrogen concentrations, though general improvement in Welsh waters is not reflected in the figures.

Papers derived from the cockle mortality investigation are being prepared for submission for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

11) Other business

Noted:

TT is a WLGA representative on the WG’s MCZ Stakeholder Focus Group

CCW’s EU funded LIFE Natura 2000 programme: *Development of a programme for the management and restoration of Natura 2000 in Wales* has begun. Jen Kelly, formerly Cardigan Bay SAC Officer, has been appointed coordinator for the marine aspects of the project; she has asked for the opportunity to give a presentation to the RAG.

Agreed: extend invitation to JK for next meeting.

Action: BB

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

10.00 hrs Weds 8 May 2013; Penclacwydd. To include presentation on LIFE N2K project.

Meeting closed at 13.25.