



MINUTES OF MEETING

10.00 HRS TUESDAY 9 JULY 2008

WILDFOWL & WETLANDS TRUST, PENCLACWYDD, LLANELLI

Present

Jane Hodges (JH) Acting-chair	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority (PCNPA)
Blaise Bullimore (BB)	EMS Officer
Anne Bunker (AB)	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Phil Coates (PC)	South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (SWSFC)
Deb Hill (DH)	City & County of Swansea
Simeon Jones (SJ)	Carmarthenshire County Council
Ziggy Otto (ZO)	CCW
Rebecca Wright (RW)	CCW

1 Welcome, apologies & personnel matters

Apologies:

Julian Atkins	City & County of Swansea
Kate Collins	Environment Agency Wales
Isabel Macho	Carmarthenshire County Council
Trevor Theobald	Pembrokeshire County Council
Dusi Thomas	Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water

DH was warmly welcomed back following her protracted period of sick-leave.

Julian Atkins had tendered his apologies following DH's return to the RAG and had extended his best wishes be extended to the group for making him feel at home.

2 Minutes of meeting 29 April 2008

Minutes received subject to noting correct spelling of Ziggy Otto's name and correct year of September meeting is 2008 rather than 200!

3 Matters arising from minutes of 26 February 2008 & not on the agenda

Noted:

Item 1: Burry Inlet storm-water discharges – update. Carried forward in absence of both DCWW and EA reps.

Item 4 Outstanding action points from meetings of November 2007 and February 2008 were flagged with previous (29 April) agenda. Completed APs noted; incomplete or partially complete APs re-identified:

DT: investigate availability of consent data provided by Lewis Keil (as spreadsheet) as GIS layers (20 November 2007, Item 4, page 3)

ALL: identify suitable volunteers to undertake contact list refresh exercise

ALL: make and take opportunities for CB&E EMS awareness-raising within their organisations; identify further opportunities for inclusion of CB&E information in their RA's public facing operations; secure corporate links to the CB&E EMS website (except CCW; and now also SWSFC)

ALL CURRENT FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTORS (except CCW & SWSFC): initiate or confirm commitments for current and subsequent FYs

LOCAL AUTHORITY RA MEMBERS: take action to secure recommencement of financial contributions with effect from current FY

CCW, CCC, CCoS, EA, PCC, PCNPA members: ensure relevant colleagues aware of RAG support for SW Wales Recreation Audit¹

ALL: ensure relevant colleagues drawn attention to the need for SMP2 to take account of EMS

Agreed:

BB to recirculate Recreation Audit aims and objectives,

ACTION: BB

Noted:

Item 6b: BB's report that encouraging e-mails received from CCC suggesting reestablishment of funding contribution and support for SJ *may* be in hand was welcomed. Conversely, BB's report of a meeting with Steve Hurr, Head Planning Pembrokeshire CC, which failed to secure any promise of reengagement or reestablishment of a funding contribution was received with considerable disappointment.

Item 10: Marine Bill. Guidance documents on MCZ selection and designation now available on Defra website. Detail of the application of many clauses to Wales remains unknown.

4 Fisheries consultations

a) Welsh Federation of Fishermen's Association scallop dredging consultation

Noted:

- Most members had received the consultation from WFFA.
- Although there is no history of king scallop (*Pecten*) presence or fishing in the Bay, the consultation issue is relevant to the RAG because of the possibility of at least exploratory fishing for queen scallops (*Chlamys* spp) which have been reported from parts of the Bay, and also for a number of the other management measures mentioned in the document, *eg* VMS.
- The WFFA's perception of the need for improved management had arisen in response to the arrival of a fleet of nomadic scallop dredgers off west Wales earlier in the year. SWSFC put a

¹ Update: as at 10 July 2008 commitments by CB&E RAs to contribute to the recreation audit this FY have been made by CCC and PCNPA.

closure in place within three miles of the coast to the west and north-west of Milford Haven to protect crustacean shellfish stocks until the national close season between June and end October began.

- Scallop dredging within EMS generally needs to be addressed at a UK scale in SWSFC's view. A national working group has been established but will not reach any conclusions before the closed season ends.
- The proposed WFFA measures undoubtedly reflect differences in opinion between local v national and static v mobile gear fishing interests.
- The existing Welsh scallop dredging Statutory Instrument only applies to *Pecten*.
- The measures identified in the consultation are aspirational; WFFA proposals are reliant on fisheries managers to deliver management. WAG *may* agree to amend the existing SI, but if not SWSFC will have to undertake consultation before introducing any further measures to follow the closed season after 1 November.
- The industry-led proposals had been welcomed by CCW and PCNPA as very positive.

b) WAG consultation on future fisheries management

Noted:

- SWSFC had been advised that the consultation was superficial, did not clearly identify options or costings, and therefore recipients could not provide informed response. It is possibly legally inadequate by virtue of not being accompanied by an RIA.
- SWSFC are concerned by the biased nature of the consultation: the SWOTs are not balanced or comprehensive; several sections are misleading or disingenuous; WAG's actions / inactions were responsible for several of the issues that the SFCs are being apparently criticised for in the consultation;
- The proposed expansion of WAG fisheries management jurisdiction to UK territorial waters adjacent to Wales is relevant because it contributes to establishing the framework for the proposed management structure.
- There is a lack of detail as to how the proposed change could work in practice.
- Many of the potential consequences of the proposed change would be relevant to the EMS, *inter alia*: likely uncertainty and real risk of loss of management jurisdiction for intertidal fisheries when the Marine Bill revokes the 1966 Sea fisheries Act (as current Welsh SI fisheries powers extend only to vessel fishing); internal government conflicts of interest between policy, regulation and implementing management; vulnerability to political pressures and short-term decision making; loss of experienced fisheries staff resulting from relocation of Fisheries Policy Branch from Cardiff to Aberystwyth.
- Existing Regulating Orders could be lost on extinguishing SFCs; measures to secure their continuation are subject to a separate consultation. There is concern that loss could adversely affect management and therefore achievement of conservation objectives and FCS.
- Responsibility for data collection and stock monitoring is unspecified.
- A change to an IFCA model (as proposed in the draft Marine Bill), on an all-Wales basis had not been included as an option in the consultation even though it would appear to be a preferable option to the three that had been included.

- Many changes from SFCs and IFCAs are positive, particularly the new and wider environmental purposes for IFCAs.
- The timescale for response is short and is influenced by the Marine Bill's progress.
- The RAG would lose the SFC as a member and it is unclear whether the WAG, whilst a competent authority, could legally fulfil the function of a relevant authority, with or without amendments to the Habitats Regulations, even though it would be undertaking the management functions of the existing fishery management relevant authority.
- This issue had been discussed at length at a recent Cardigan Bay SAC RAG meeting and it had been agreed to write to the WAG seeking clarification.

Agreed: This RAG also seek clarification from WAG. JH and BB to draft letter and circulate to members for comment prior to sending.

ACTION: BB / JH

c) Welsh Fisheries Strategy

Noted:

- The strategy was due to be signed off at a Strategy working group meeting the following day.
- Some members expressed continued reservations about parts of the strategy, particularly the remaining self-contradictions and poorly substantiated or uncorroborated claims about the sustainability of current Welsh fisheries.

Agreed: PC to relay these concerns to the Strategy working group meeting and recommend the Strategy be published as a “living document” and responses should be invited.

ACTION: PC

5 CCW briefing

a) Regulation 33 advice

Noted:

- The date of the previously promised date for delivery had again passed.
- CCW consider that the conservation objectives still require further work before release to ensure consistency between sites. A contract to a marine scientist to finalise the advice packages was in the process of being let, with a delivery date of early autumn.
- ZO had previously advised there would be substantial changes to the advice for CB&E EMS but it was not possible to confirm this remains the case.
- Whilst any change to conservation objectives may require the existing management schemes to be revisited, one benefit of this site's scheme still being in development is that it has time to accommodate any changes more readily.
- Members remain concerned that the conservation objectives must be fit for purpose, particularly for the assessment of plans and projects.

b) Unitisation and ISIS Action Database

Noted:

- CCW “Special Sites Project” led by Andrew Peterken to contribute to delivery of the Wales Environment Strategy's outcome 21 (securing the favourable condition of national and international designated sites by specified target dates).

- Unitisation refers to the identification of “management units” within each site (30 identified for CB&E). The database records actions identified by CCW to secure the sites in favourable condition. Action database described as complementary to RAG management scheme. Management plans for terrestrial sites have been published on CCW website; marine site equivalent is deemed to be Regulation 33 advice. Unit maps and actions database are anticipated as available *via* CCW website in autumn 2008.
- Members were concerned that identification of actions duplicated the work of the RAG and that the work was being undertaken independently of other relevant authorities.
- Andrew Peterken has been tasked to liaise with Wales EMS Officers (via GEMS) to ensure integrated development of management scheme and CCW-identified actions for EMS.

Agreed: RW to contact Andrew Peterken to ensure liaison with GEMS / EMSOs is initiated promptly.

ACTION: RW

c) Scoter and other feature monitoring (ref minutes of 29 April 2008, item 9b)

Noted:

- AB reported that despite substantial decrease in scoter numbers recorded in winter 2007-08, CCW had not made resources available to continue scoter population monitoring.
- Benthic habitat sampling in collaboration with EAW had been undertaken in May which was hoped to provide information on scoter prey resources. Concern was expressed that this was not synchronised with scoter monitoring.
- Members expressed concern that monitoring the status of the feature of the UK’s only fully marine SPA appears to have ceased for the foreseeable future. RW was asked to relay this concern to appropriate colleagues.
- Mussel and cockle population monitoring is scheduled for the early autumn (usually mid September) and intertidal monitoring of “notable” habitats (*eg* rock-pools) in September.
- *Agreed:* a long-term monitoring strategy is essential to generate information to inform management. CCW was asked to advise the RAG of the long-term monitoring strategy for the EMS.

ACTION: RW

ACTION: CCW

d) Site assessment & report to EC – further information (ref minutes of 29 April 2008, item 7 and previous meetings, and letter from CCW CX to Chair of Pembrokeshire Marine SAC previously circulated)

Noted: No further information yet available

e) Bird food model & data meeting (ref minutes of 29 April 2008, item 9a)

Noted:

- The model continues to develop and is being expanded to include the Three Rivers, other bird species and other prey species.
- Data shortfalls and mismatches are being addressed, including from SWSFC and with an intertidal macrofauna survey of Pembrey beach.
- An article on the picric-acid-dyed oystercatcher research was included in the current edition of BTO News; JH to provide to BB to circulate.

ACTION: JH / BB

6 Budget & finance planning

a) Budget

Noted:

- A budget summary had been circulated with minutes of previous meeting.
- Several minor discrepancies between BB's and CCoS's records remain, but the most significant was an approximately £1500 mismatch between the carry forward from 2006-07 to 2007-08 which remains unresolved.
- The reported excess of spend over income for the FY 2007-08 had been reduced to zero by CCoS making a contribution equivalent to that value, thus leaving the value of reserves at the beginning of 2008-09 the same as at the start of 2007-08.
- BB had not yet received a final confirmation of existing commitments from contributing RAs.
- The budget for the current and next FY had been had reviewed and revised to better align with the revised work programme agreed at the meeting of 26 February. Once confirmed income is received and included it will be recirculated. At the worst case scenario, the balance, including all current reserves, is currently predicted to be approximately £3k at end of 2009-10.

Agreed: BB to circulate revised budget when all necessary information to hand. **ACTION: BB**

b) EMS Officer contract (expires 23/7/08)

Noted: extension of contract for one year is in hand.

c) Planned Expenditure

Liaison contact list refresh. No action had been taken by members to identify potential volunteers.

Agreed: postpone discussion as public meetings not imminent.

Otter survey

Noted:

- Information on otter distribution and use of coastal and estuarine waters in the site is almost non-existent. A RAG funded survey and volunteer monitoring project in the Pembrokeshire Marine SAC has proved cost effective and engaged interested members of the public; the project continues under the auspices of the Pembrokeshire BAP partnership.
- Geoff Liles, The Otter Consultancy, had submitted an unsuccessful bid to CCW following the Pembrokeshire survey and had recently resubmitted the proposal to BB.
- The potential for added value relevant to the RAG by engaging members of the public.

Agreed: BB to follow up and secure indicative costings.

ACTION: BB

Bait digging / collection survey

Noted:

CCW contract has been let for Milford Haven area. BB to follow up with Mike Camplin for details and scale of costs.

ACTION: BB

7 EMS officer report

Noted:

- In view of long time since this agenda item had had time available much had happened and only a brief summary was provided.

Management scheme development

Noted:

- Work is currently focussed on gap filling from the “PITs” report and moving forward to the assessment of activities to support identification of management actions.
- There had been a nil response to the request to members issued prior to the last meeting for *all* RA’s to identify their authority's priorities for gap filling with respect to identifying or refining likely management issues. The request was reiterated.

Agreed:

- BB to recirculate PITs report and to clearly describe the task **ACTION: BB**
- Deadline for response end of August. **ACTION: ALL**

Noted:

- Work has begun to flesh out the previously agreed framework structure for management scheme.
- As the management scheme strategy requires the main MS document to be bilingual and the technical annexes to be in English only, activity assessments will be included in an annex and the assessment work will be undertaken as part of compiling that annex; this task has just begun.

Website

Noted:

- The Welsh language side of the website has been live for a couple of months
- Summary graphs of usage statistics were tabled which showed a steady increase in visits requesting multiple pages and time spent on the site.

Promotional products

Noted:

- Pens and bookmark sized card / flyers had been delivered. Both are “environmentally-friendly” products. The cards are recycled pulp card printed with biodegradable inks². Members were urged to take a supply for widest distribution. **ACTION: ALL**
- Banner-stands were on order with delivery expected soon.

² The pen bodies are made from corn-starch and the pens are claimed to be 90% biodegradable.

- Members whose offices received large numbers of public visitors (notably local authorities) were asked to secure agreements to place a banner-stand in an appropriate, prominent, location for a period of time to raise the EMS's profile with both the public and RA staff. **ACTION: ALL**

SW Wales Recreational Audit

Noted: Sufficient resources have been obtained to make progress with data collection. Members were again asked to ensure their respective colleagues representing their authorities on the Recreational Audit partnership working group were aware of the potential value of the outputs to the EMS (and other EMSs) and to encourage resourcing of the project by their authorities. BB to recirculate aim and objectives of project and confirm current contributors. **ACTION: BB**³

Razorfish electro-fishing- project

Noted: Little recent information. Project well behind schedule because of poor weather.

Meetings etc

Noted:

- Presentations to Welsh Institute for Sustainable Environments marine workshop, 28 February; Carmarthenshire BAP; 3 March; Gower Countryside Forum, 2 July.
- Liaison / information meetings (additional to those reported above): NT; CCC recreation and MCP managers, harbourmaster
- Other meetings: LIFE+ EC funding launch; EA Catchment Planning Workshop; UK MPA steering group.
- Events: Fish week launch; Pembrokeshire Coastal Forum NTZ debate.

BB would be on leave for the second half of July (21 July – 5 August incl).

8 Relevant authority updates

a) information exchange

Noted:

- (PC) cockle mortality currently approx 85% both north and south Burry Inlet and Laugharne.
- (PC) SWSFC published 'Guide for sea anglers and recreational fishing' leaflet circulated for information.
- (PC) SWSFC office relocation to Riverside House, Morfa Road, Swansea in September.

³ Funding provided so far this FY from PCNPA, Wales Tourism, Carmarthenshire CC, Bridgend CC. Bids made to CCoS, CCW, EAW, PCC.

b) research & monitoring reports

Noted:

Cockle mortalities

- (BB) WAG announcement that EAW will lead the investigations.
- (PC) SWSFC are sampling fortnightly; samples going to CEFAS Weymouth (parasites), Centre for Applied Marine Science (CAMS) Bangor, and WISE Swansea; WISE have deployed oxygen and temperature loggers; many samples are being stored for later analysis because of insufficient resources;
- Interim report by CAMS / WISE published. Concern from EAW as report highlighting water quality as a possible contributory cause;
- EAW have identified an initial £10k to start sample analysis;
- CAMS struggling to report within budget; no slack for field or lab work;
- EAW empowered by WAG to lead but resources subject to bidding;
- EAW-led workshop planned for mid-September to identify future research plans;
- Swansea University MSc investigating spawning behaviour in Burry Inlet, Three Rivers and control sites is commencing;
- (ZO) CCW sampling four additional transects using same methods as SWSFC / CAMS.
- (BB) CCW Habitat sensitivity to fishing operations report recently published. Companion report on sensitivity to access for fishery purposes to be published soon.

9 Other business

None raised.

10 Date(s) of next meeting(s)

Confirmed: 10.00 Weds 17 September 2008

Subsequent meeting: 10.00 Weds 3 December 2008

Meeting closed at 13.50