

## Minutes of the Meeting of Finding Sanctuary Steering Group

**Meeting held at the Estuary Room, Darts Farm Village,  
Topsham on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008**

**Present:** Harry Studholme (Chair), Jim Masters, Fiona Wynne, Keith Hiscock, Charlotte Johnston, Jamie Davies, Jim Portus, Peter Macconnell, Roger Covey, Julian Roberts, John Butterwith, Keith Bower, Joan Edwards, Ian Barrett, Tom Hooper, Louise Lieberknecht, Sally Porter

**Presentations given by:** Ian Barrett, Louise Lieberknecht

**Minutes taken by:** Tom Hooper

	<i>Please note that all documents and presentations relating to this meeting are attached to these minutes</i>	<b>TO BE ACTIONED BY</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b></p> <p>HS welcomed everyone followed by short introductions from each member of the Steering Group.</p> <p><b>Apologies were received from:</b></p> <p>Mark Layton, Cheryl Hiles, Neil Warren</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of previous meeting and Matters Arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comment on presentation to ensure that minutes include date and list of attendees.</li> <li>• A comment was made that within this group it would be very useful for a speaker to be identified in minutes, so it is possible to go back to that person. A question as to whether there is a point in not attributing, ie 'Chatham House Rules'.</li> <li>• Also similar point was raised of the importance of having open meetings such as those held in California.</li> <li>• There was a discussion amongst members about this point.</li> <li>• A blow by blow account should be avoided, with the minutes drawing together the threads of the conversation. However there will be some occasions where comments will need to be attributed. It is down to individual speakers to highlight whether they wish a particular comment or contribution attributed to themselves in the minutes.</li> <li>• There was an additional point that members should also make it known when a comment is a personal rather than a representative one.</li> </ul>	<b>TH</b>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Presentation from Ian Barrett</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In introducing Ian Barrett, Defra's head of Marine Biodiversity the Chairman mentioned that the link to Defra and the Government's vision within the Marine Bill is fundamental to the whole project. It is important that we understand the framework and context in order to take this process further.</li> </ul> <p>The main points of the presentation were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Government is still very much at the project initiation stage as far as designation of MPAs goes. They are still in discussion with other agencies and stakeholders. Plans for a National framework will be developed over the next six months and a strategy is expected in September 2008.</li> </ul>	

- The Government has been very much looking at lessons from Finding Sanctuary in terms of the best way to go about site selection and is very keen to benefit from advice and feedback from the process here in the South West.
- As outlined by Jonathan Shaw, Minister for Marine, Landscape and Rural affairs in November 2007; the Government is looking to set up a network of marine protected areas to conserve the richness of our marine wildlife.
- The key elements comprise the importance of biodiversity together with the ecosystem approach that ensures that the overall system is robust and healthy enough to provide the goods and services that we need and can cope with changing factors such as climate change.
- The Government has entered into a number of international commitments which reflect the importance which it places on this. These include a commitment to set up an ecologically coherent network of well managed areas for OSPAR by 2010. More likely to achieve this by 2012, but still a very ambitious and important target.
- Also important that we can define exactly what an MPA is. For the purposes here, we are talking about protective sites for nature conservation. A separate team is looking at sites for fish stocks.
- There are three major types of MPA. The European Natura sites known as Special Areas of Conservation or Special Protection Areas (SAC and SPAs) and a new type being introduced within the Marine Bill known as Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs).
- There are many marine Natura sites, although these are predominantly coastal. JNCC have put the first offshore sites out for consultation.
- It is important that we are able to have a coherent picture for all prospective sites, and regional projects potentially have an important role within this.
- We are establishing a series of four regional projects around England: East Channel, North Sea, Irish Sea and the South West. These will very much be following the Finding Sanctuary approach, although it is important that each belongs to their own region. The Government has their own requirements too, and we will need to explore to what extent these are the same things.
- Work is ongoing to concisely define the meaning of 'ecologically coherent' and to develop simple principles. Essentially it is about having enough sites to protect what is important, big enough to be viable, connected and developed with effective public participation.
- The UK coastline is very well studied and we have enough information to start to develop a network. There are still questions, however on areas where we don't have enough data and how this is overcome.
- The regional projects are expected to make recommendations which will go via the conservation agencies to Ministers. We hope that a good level of consensus will be achieved. Following a formal consultation round, sites will be designated.
- There are also other components such as advisory groups to help formulate the network and to ensure that departments such as BERR (Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform) can feed in their advice to regional groups and that each regional project has the best available information.
- JNCC will lead on communications and engagement with international stakeholders. We cannot designate a network which makes perfect sense on a National scale, but not Internationally. The outputs need to be taken to RACs (Regional Advisory Councils) and Europe with recommendations fed back to regional projects.
- By Easter 2010 we hope that Natural England and JNCC will have given us a good idea of where Natura sites will be located. Recommendations from regional projects are expected to be ready by Easter 2011. We expect that having gone through a number of permutations, discussion and permutations regionally that sites will be able to be designated more quickly.

## Questions

- One of the earlier slides showed the Inner Bristol Channel as rock. In fact it is mostly sand and gravel.
- In response IB explained that there were different levels of confidence for different areas. This area is not identified as a Natura site, and of course no sites would be taken forward for SACs without surveys and ground truthing.
- A further comment was made of the problems of British Geological Survey (BGS) maps which have been put together using an old system known as a 'Folk Triangle' which means that anything coarser than gravel is described as rock.
- Furthermore it was noted that Finding Sanctuary is using other fine scale surveys and not just BGS maps.
- The data shown on these maps is very important, particularly when it comes to show how decisions are being made. A suggestion was made that perhaps the maps could be taken to steering group meetings and amended based on people's knowledge.
- There was a second question on whether Defra will give enough financial resources to scientific endeavour so that we know what is on the seabed and in the water column before decisions are taken. The cutting back of science budgets is one of the causes of the current distrust of fisheries science recommendations.
- In response IB explained that surveys take a long time. If decisions are expected to be on the Minister's desk by 2011, then we will have to proceed on the basis of what we know now. This does present challenges, but there is sufficient knowledge available to proceed with planning. Stakeholders remain a very important part of this: It is potentially easier to go ahead with a coarse level of knowledge with broad agreement, than a controversial area with fine scale data. We are likely to end up with a range of solutions.
- A further point was raised that this is potentially a dangerous way forward, since you should not put forward proposals on erroneous information.
- In response, IB explained that the question is more about how much information you need before you make a decision. You can always get better information, but this would cost a lot of money and take time, meanwhile there is ongoing damage to seabed. The point of the precautionary principle is that you need to make proportionate, risk-based decisions on the information you have. The precautionary principle is about taking decisions proportionate to knowledge and risk-making sensible decisions.
- A question was raised about whether it is possible to capture seabed information as part of the Finding Sanctuary interviews.
- In response, the Finding Sanctuary team said that this was a key part of the interviews taking place with stakeholders. However, interviewees so far were reluctant to respond. We believe that this could be because there is a perception that any important spawning grounds or habitats will be prioritised for protection.
- A question was raised about the opportunity for the project to use a confidence rating for habitats. There was no conclusive answer to this question.
- A further question was posed on the precautionary approach and the importance of making decisions on firm evidence. Due to the fact that many inshore fishing vessels are struggling for survival it is important to put forward accurate proposals based on good knowledge.
- In response, IB explained that the precautionary principle is a way of making decisions on less than perfect knowledge. He noted that there are likely to be many discussions on this basis within the Steering Group.
- A question was raised on how Natura sites will relate to Finding Sanctuary.
- In response, IB explained that he believed it was important that these processes were co-ordinated to as great an extent as possible so that the whole picture could be considered.

	<p>There is consideration as to how great a role the regional groups could play within Natura as they seem like good forums.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Communications and Engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a brief update on the funding situation. With reference to how important this is to the progress on the project. It was reinforced that commitments and interest from current funders should hopefully ensure that the project is able to continue at least on its current level of staffing and resources.</li> <li>• The development of an Interreg project amongst European partners from Spain, France, Portugal and Ireland was also highlighted. This project is being developed through 2008 with a particular emphasis on sharing information and developing coherent sites at a European level.</li> <li>• As part of the Fisherman project there will be a workshop that will focus on stakeholder information as part of good planning in the marine environment. There was also reference to the current plans for expert workshops and a request for any guidance for how these should be organised and suggestions for how the outputs are used.</li> <li>• The development of the Web GIS and interactive component was also highlighted.</li> <li>• The presentation then focused on the communication and education aspects of Finding Sanctuary. Within the team, a further liaison officer is expected to be recruited in early June. The project is aware that individual engagement so far has been limited to commercial fishermen in Devon and Dorset. This is largely due to funding limitations, although one advantage is that it has allowed the project to develop its methodology and database structures before expanding.</li> <li>• The individual meetings allow us to gather specific activity and knowledge information, anecdotal information and to communicate the project. We plan to expand those other sectors that have an individual component ie angling, boating etc through this year.</li> <li>• There are also industrial and business sectors such as aggregates, ports and harbours and offshore renewable. The project needs to think more carefully about these constituents and how we engage with them. In particular Finding Sanctuary is keen to organise single sector meetings.</li> <li>• For example, on 29<sup>th</sup> May a meeting is planned with a group of active and prominent regional sea anglers to help guide Finding Sanctuary in the development of questionnaires and to help us understand more generally how the activity is organised.</li> <li>• The communication of the project also important. Finding Sanctuary needs to ensure that stakeholders fully understand that the plan is iterative. One of the fears at this point is the fallout that may emerge once lines are put on a map.</li> <li>• The project recognizes the importance of the need to improve communications to a wider stakeholder audience.</li> <li>• A table was presented to the Steering Group which will help the project team gain a better understanding of each sector: who are the main people, organisations and what are the best means that the project can engage with them.</li> <li>• A basic amount of information has been entered into the table, but a request was made to the Steering Group to assist by completing the questionnaire so that more information could be included.</li> <li>• In general, Finding Sanctuary aims to improve its communications through the use of the website, newsletters and other media. Steering Group members were encouraged to guide and assist where possible.</li> <li>• A point was raised that the Sea Fisheries Committees would expect to be invited to expert advice workshops and the Fisherman workshop. But should they not be run together?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Steering Group Members</b></p>

- In response it was stated that the objectives of the Fishermap/expert workshops are different: The Fishermap workshop is looking at techniques of mapping and processing data whereas fisheries science expert workshop is asking for guidance on achieving a network that includes best science.
- However, it was agreed that information coming out of Fishermap should be available to fisheries forum and that it would be a good idea to reconvene the group to revisit questions.
- There was also a question on what percentage of stakeholders have contributed to the Fishermap project.
- In response, our experience from North Devon show a figure of around 40-50% which is a baseline that we hope to achieve throughout region.
- It was noted that the process of individual mapping is slow, but this is the most effective way of collecting data. However, there is a great value from general discussion which goes beyond data collection.
- A point was made that the project needs to ensure that a good coverage of stakeholder activity is achieved, since any gaps may give a misleading picture Eg an area shown as having no activity, may not actually be the case.
- It was reinforced that Finding Sanctuary will not be 'grabbing' sites on this basis. Since the data goes through a group validation process in which collated maps are brought to meetings of all individual participants we aim to ensure that we can question any obvious gaps. However, it is true that the use of the sea is complicated and the project needs to be aware of this danger. The Steering Group has an important role in helping to iron out this issue.
- A point was raised that the project does not have unlimited resources to develop fisheries science or knowledge. On this basis there was a concern for the limitations of the project, particularly if there remains an aim to use 'best available science'
- In response it was noted that this is a key issue from the Government's point of view. One of the key reasons for stakeholder participation is to use limited time and resources to get a high quality network. It is noted of course, that it can only be good as the inputs. There is very much an onus on industry to make sure that this is achieved.
- A question was raised as to the extent to which the project has engaged with the commercial sector from the Welsh side.
- Some contact has been made with the Welsh Professional Fishermens' Association (Jerry Percy) and the possibility of a meeting discussed, but no dates set. The Welsh have looked at the Fishermap project and are hoping to carry out a similar process.
- A point was made on the importance for fishermen to be encouraged to give information. Although some may be tempted to ring larger areas with a view to gaining compensation it is important that the project gains as accurate a picture as possible.
- In response, it was explained that the atmosphere in which interviews take place vary. On the whole fishermen understand the importance of giving information. It helps that liaison officers are both experienced and guide respondents towards an output that is credible and realistic. At points it has to be reinforced that staking grounds is important. It is generally encouraged that mapping meetings take place in a positive atmosphere.
- A question was raised that since Finding Sanctuary is a big investment for the region and whether, therefore this was backed up by financial and more general support from Government.
- In response IB explained that there is commitment right from the Minister through to Senior Defra people to get network and framework in place and to make sure network is as good as it can be.
- A further point was raised on the importance of VMS (Vessel Monitoring System) to management and enforcement of sites.

5.

### The Developing MPA Network

- Louise Lieberknecht gave a short presentation on the developing network together with some basic results from the science workshops.
- At the point of the Steering Group meeting, there was as yet no early draft of an MPA network with sites and protection levels to show the group. However, a series of science workshops had identified some of the basic ecological requirements that the network would need to meet in order to be ecologically coherent. The outputs from these workshops are now being processed to develop an early MPA network draft.
- Some of the scientists attending the workshops also work in conservation organisations. They were encouraged to give scientific rather than 'position-inflated' responses.
- The first four workshops came up with a lot of information. They all agreed on the importance of reconvening to see how information is being used and continue with guidance.
- Broad scale physical guidance was more successful and responses included what activities would need to be restricted.
- The advice is complicated and there are still many datasets that need to be pursued.
- A key point made that was emphasized to the group is that Fisherman is not yet completed, nor have we properly started collecting activity data from other maritime users. It is important that this human information can be incorporated into the planning process. Ideally, all the human activity information gathering would already have been carried out. However, the parallel process means that the first MPA network draft will be based purely on ecological inputs, while the human activity mapping is being completed. The first draft should look very different from the ultimate network, which will (in addition to the ecological inputs) be based on the spatial distribution of human activities, and input from the Steering Group.
- A question was put to the Steering Group regarding the Expert Workshops regarding their thoughts on the set up and planned themes of the workshops.
- There was also a request for further guidance from the Steering Group as to how they would like information presented. The MPA planning process will be iterative, with many possible alternative configurations explored by the planning team. It is possible to present this work in detail to the group, but it will mean presenting a large number of maps and potential information overload. On the other hand, it would be possible to present a broader overview of those sites which repeatedly seem to be incorporated into the developing network, together with some examples of alternative configurations..
- The first opinion was that a general overview is more appropriate with detailed questions taken up separately.
- It was mentioned that it would be useful to members of the Steering Group to have clear guidance from the project team about what they are being required to do with information, for example 'read' or 'comment'.
- It was added that one of the benefits of the Steering Group is that information is looked at and discussed together. The key is to provide an overview of the stage we have reached together with clear questions on what we want the Steering Group to address.
- It was suggested that we could follow a similar land based strategy in which we show an 'area of search' in which we expect a site may eventually be located. However, there was concern that as more information becomes available we may need to move outside this area; therefore the area of search is essentially the entire South West region.
- A question was raised as to whether seasonal MPAs could be included within the network. This was asked in particular reference to the proposal for a six month skate and ray closure

	<p>in North Devon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In response, it was confirmed that the network can include seasonal sites and an example was given in another context in which the network could protect seasonal aggregations of seabirds. However, it was stated that the network would be unlikely to include features that move.</li> <li>• A suggestion was made to have three or four different solutions for the group to consider.</li> <li>• There was a request to ensure that the group has a clear understanding of the terms used within the MPA umbrella.</li> <li>• The use of the Marxan tool which showed how often an area has been selected was suggested as a useful means for making decisions. It was added that there remains a great deal of flexibility at the moment and these areas may shift.</li> <li>• There was a suggestion that the first iteration of the network only comes to the Steering Group and is not shown more widely. This will enable discussion to take place, without fear that the data be misinterpreted or stakeholders not understand the iterative development of the network.</li> <li>• There was a suggestion that the project could take a smaller subsection where human activity exists, for example North Devon and present potential sites in that area.</li> <li>• There was discussion on the Gantt chart and the decision making process for the Steering Group. It was pointed out that the proposed schedule is still quite fluid. It was added that the more close together the meetings, the less advances there will be in terms of the network, but the greater the insight. A balance needs to be struck.</li> <li>• The Steering Group requested guidance from the project team as to when there is enough advancement for an interesting discussion.</li> <li>• The group requested to see more of the data sets. The group offered help to comment on the validity or quality of data sets that were within their areas of expertise. There was a question as to whether, when considering SACs, we will be looking at the boundary of the area or whole habitat.</li> <li>• The issue of communication with stakeholders was raised, to ensure that we improve wider understanding to avoid problems further down the line.</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>The date of our next Project Board Meeting will take place at 11.00am on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October Estuary Room, Darts Farm.</b></p>	

**Handouts included:**

- **Report to Steering Group November 2007-May 2008**
- **Information for agenda item on Communications to Stakeholder groups**
- **Table showing basic information about stakeholder sectors and engagement mechanisms**
- **Questionnaire for Steering Group members on sector groups**