



Berwickshire & Northumberland  
Marine Nature Partnership

## Steering Group Meeting 10.00am 2nd July 2020 Virtual meeting

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

#### Attendees:

Alex Aitken	AA	Northumberland IFCA
Nick Brodin	NB	Berwickshire and Northumberland MNP
Anne Brown	AB	Scottish Natural Heritage
Anthony Crook	AC	Environment Agency
David Feige (Chair)	DF	Northumberland County Council
Malcolm Fraser	MF	Scottish Natural Heritage
Gwen Potter	GP	National Trust
Andy Tharme	AT	Scottish Borders Council
Zahra Ravenscroft	ZR	Environment Agency

#### Apologies:

None

DF welcomed everyone to the partnership's first virtual meeting.

### 2. Minutes of last meeting

The actions from the last Steering Group in March 2020 were reviewed. Progress with action points is summarised in the table below.

Action	Who	Status
A draft of the new Scheme/action plan will be brought to the next Steering Group meeting	NB	Plans altered due to COVID 19 – dealt with in main meeting agenda

Action	Who	Status
Any offers or suggestions for a lead organisation for a Facilitation Fund bid on coastal streams should go to HW	All	ZR reported that Northumberland Rivers Trust are putting in a bid for the Aidans Coastal Streams. If successful some help may be needed to administer this
Produce a Terms of Reference for the new Data, Monitoring and Research subgroup	NB	In progress. NB hopes to circulate next week.

### 3. Impacts of COVID-19 and Partner Updates

The Steering Group discussed the impacts of COVID-19 on their work.

Scottish Natural Heritage: MS reported that the pandemic has caused delays to SNH's marine work. This has included delays to the proposed designation of a new suite of marine SPAs. This is now likely to be delayed until at least the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. The Regional Inshore Fisheries Group for the east coast has not met since January so discussions around the proposed squid fishery on the Berwickshire coast.

AB mentioned that the National Trust for Scotland are proposing significant staff cuts to their Ranger posts as a result of COVID 19. This is a concern at the St Abbs Head NNR, which is one of the posts earmarked for redundancy, where the Ranger plays an important role in seabird monitoring and in managing interactions between the public and grey seals.

Northumberland County Council: DF reported that the Northumberland Coast AONB were partners in a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a project on shorebirds. Due to COVID 19, the Lottery Fund are refocusing their priorities on supporting the charitable and heritage sectors through the crisis so will not be considering the bid at this time.

Environment Agency: ZS provided an update from the Environment Agency. Staff are currently working from home and are likely to be doing so for the next 6-12 months. Will know next week whether marine monitoring work this year can go ahead. Hope to carry out macroalgae and seagrass monitoring at Holy Island and benthic surveys on the Blyth estuary. The EA's Coast and Flood Risk Management Team have a new budget for environmental projects. ZS is exploring the possibility of submitting a proposal to this budget for work at Holy Island/Budle Bay.

NIFCA: AA reporting that the potting industry had been badly impacted by COVID 19 and although things were starting to recover prices were still low. Northumberland IFCA has maintained an enforcement presence throughout the lockdown although the regular fish surveys of the AIn estuary and lobster/crab monitoring has been cancelled. Periwinkle surveys at Berwick, Holy Island, Boulmer and St Mary's have gone ahead as it was possible to do these while observing social distancing. A Code of Conduct has been produced for hand-gathering. AA suggested that there was scope to work with the Marine Nature

Partnership on this and will email NB the details **ACTION AA**. Management measures for the Coquet to St Mary's MCZ will be agreed at NIFCA's next meeting later this month.

Scottish Borders Council: Council staff are currently working from home with site visits only being allowed on a case by case basis. AT has dealt with a couple of large applications for planning permission at Eyemouth Harbour. AT also reported that the Tweed Forum have appointed a Development Officer to take forward the next stage of their Destination Tweed lottery bid.

The National Trust: GP reported that the Farne Islands are being visited a couple of days a week to carry out maintenance work. Wildlife cameras are being used the rest of the time to keep the islands secure. Staff are visiting the Long Nanny tern colony daily but are very stretched. There are increased issues with people and dogs at the site as well as problems with predators. Arctic terns have disappeared from the sites following high tides in June, which caused significant dune erosion. There are reports of reduced arctic tern numbers on Inner Farne and on Coquet Island, and the biggest the UK site for the species at The Skerries has also seen arctic terns abandon this year. Little terns are still present at Lon Nanny although will be vulnerable to the high tides forecast for this weekend. Eider have successfully produced chicks on the shoreline by Lindisfarne Castle.

#### 4. Project Officer Update

A written update was included with the papers for the meeting. Delivery of the Eider Aware project has been hit by COVID 19 restrictions with public events being cancelled and promotion of the eider recording app being put on hold. Timescales for delivery have been extended into next year with the agreement of funders.

Responses have been submitted to the consultation on the North East Marine Plan and to the EA's Challenges and Choices consultation.

#### 5. Progress with Updating the Management Scheme

NB had originally proposed to hold a series of face-to-face meetings with partnership members during the spring and produce a revised Management Scheme and Action Plan to bring back to the Steering Group for this meeting. COVID 19 restrictions have meant that this was not possible. A series of virtual meetings will be held with organisations to discuss the Scheme, although some thought will be needed about how to liaise with smaller organisation most effectively. There is also scope for some theme-based virtual meetings to support the review process. NB will report back on progress at the next meeting.

## 6. Draft annual report and future reporting

A draft of a progress report was circulated prior to the meeting. This covers the period from January 2016 (when our last report was produced) up to the end of March 2020. NB hopes to produce similar reports on an annual basis from now on.

The Steering Group were asked to consider:

- a) The format of the draft report and whether it covers the topics that need to be covered in the correct amount of depth; and
- b) Any anything that is unclear or contains incorrect information. Of particular interest to NB is any updated information on current site condition and any views about the assessment of progress in section 6/Table 3

Any comments should be sent to NB by Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July **ACTION ALL**

## 7. Partnership Finance

DF reported that for the first-time last year partnership outgoings were greater than partnership income. This is not immediate crisis as a good surplus has been built up over the years but DF wanted to flag at this stage as partnership contributions have been slowly declining over a number of years and if this continues then finances will eventually become a problem.

## 8. Project Proposal – building capacity for marine interpretation and outreach

NB has produced paper setting out a potential project to build capacity for marine interpretation and outreach within the partnership area. This has developed out of the Coquet to Tyne Stakeholder Workshop which was held in June last year and which identified the importance of public engagement. The proposal is still loose and needs further discussions to develop it. The boundary of any future project still needs to be agreed. NB suggested concentration on Coquet to St Mary's for delivering interpretation activity but looking at the whole partnership area to deliver capacity building for organisations. He noted that the Berwickshire Marine Reserve are currently carrying out an ambitious and successful seabed interpretation project which we could learn from.

The Steering Group confirmed that they were happy for NB to do further work to develop the project proposal and to report back at future meetings. AA reported that NIFCA have good underwater mapping and footage for the Coquet to St Mary's MCZ that could be used to help with interpretation. ZS mentioned the work that the Environment Agency is doing on the Blyth and the Wansbeck to engage stakeholders and which could be used to inform any future outreach activities.

## 9. AOB

DF provided an update on the Coastal Mitigation Service for Northumberland. This was due to be launched in the spring but was delayed because of COVID 19. The service will operate under the public name of “Space for Shorebirds” and will show increased activity now that restrictions are easing. Richard Willis, the Senior Ranger, will be recruiting for an assistant in a few weeks’ time. MF asked that the Steering group be kept up to date on progress with the service **ACTION DF**

AA mentioned that Marine Scotland have a new fisheries enforcement officer in post for South East Scotland, who would make a good contact for the partnership.

## 10. Table of actions from meeting

Action	Who	Status
AA and NB to discuss potential link up of the MNP with NIFCAs work on a Code of Conduct for hand gathering	AA/NB	
Any comments on the draft Progress Report should be sent to NB by Friday 31 <sup>st</sup> July	All	
DF to keep the Steering Group informed on progress with the Coastal Mitigation Service	DF	