



Berwickshire & Northumberland
Marine Nature Partnership

Notes of Annual Partnership Meeting (held online)

9th December 2021

Present: Jane Delany – Chair (Newcastle University), Nick Brodin (Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership), Lydia Speakman (Natural England), Malcolm Fraser (NatureScot), Bex Lynam (North Sea Wildlife Trusts), Blair Easton (St Abbs Marine Station), Alex Aitken (Northumberland IFCA), Anna Lamaj (Forth Estuary Forum), Joe Richards (Blue Marine Foundation), Blanaid Denman (RSPB), Clare McCarty (MMO), David Feige (Northumberland County Council), Gwen Potter (National Trust), Christine Bell (Eyemouth Harbour), Iain Robson (Northumberland Coast AONB), Helen Dowie (Marine Scotland), Lucy Stainthorpe (Natural England), Michelle McLachlan Hay (Northern Lighthouse Board), Louise Hopkins (MMO), Don O’Meara (Historic England), Jamie Stewart (River Tweed Commission), Anna Griffin (SEPA), Catherine Scott (Natural England)

Apologies: Andy Tharme/Debbie McClean (Scottish Borders Council), Stuart Bell (Marine Scotland), Kevin Scott (St Abbs Marine Station), James Maclean/Stuart Pudney (Northumbrian Water), Hannah Westoby/Anthony Crook (Environment Agency)

1. Welcome and Introductions (Jane Delany)

JD welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Attendees introduced themselves and NB announced apologies.

2. Previous Minutes and Matters Arising

Previous minutes from December 2020 were accepted. Any matters arising were dealt with as part of the main agenda.

All action points from the last meeting have been discharged.

3. Project Officer Update (Nick Brodin)

NB gave a presentation to update the group on progress since the last meeting. A copy of this is attached to the minutes.

The fall-out from COVID has continued impact on work over the last 12-months but 2021 has still seen a lot happening both locally and nationally. This has included publication of the North East

Marine Plan in June, the Environment Act coming into law in England, and the designation of the Outer Firth of Forth and St Andrews Bay Complex SPA, whose southern boundary extends down to Eyemouth.

The work of the Marine Nature Partnership this year has included:

- Consulting on and publishing an updated Management Scheme for our inshore marine protected areas
- Eider Duck Day 2021 held as an online event
- Drafting commenced of Recreational Good Practice Guidelines and Marine INNS Strategy

In early 2022 we will be commencing a joint project with the Durham Heritage Coast to Work with stakeholders to build a common understanding of likely climate change impacts and identify responses to those. This will be funded by the Environment Agency's Championing Coastal Coordination (3Cs) programme and forms part of a larger national project led on by the Coastal Partnerships Network.

Steady progress has been made on delivering out framework for delivering a well-managed network of marine protected areas. The main area of concern identified is the lack of progress on published condition assessments of sites.

4. Scottish East Coast Review (Anna Lamaj)

AL provided an update on the East Coast Review. A link to the presentation will be circulated with the notes of the meeting.

The Review is being led by the Forth Estuary Forum with funding from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund. The Review aims to update knowledge about the state of the coast provide a baseline for future Regional Marine Planning. The outputs will be:

- Overview and Regional State of Coasts Reports
- A Digital Portal
- Support to National Marine Plan Interactive (NMPI)
- Identification of data gaps
- Stakeholder's needs Assessment Report

The Review will gather unidentified information from known stakeholders and engage with new stakeholders (including citizen science groups) to identify new information and needs.

5. Workshop session: Reviewing the MNP Delivery Plan

Attendees were assigned to small groups in break out rooms and reviewed the range of topics covered by [the Delivery Plan](#) for the Management Scheme. A number of comments were fed back from groups around topics such as engagement and recreational activities. NB will use the feedback to inform updates of the Plan.

6. Introduction to the LIFE WADER Project (Lydia Speakman)

WADER is a 5-year project funded from EU LIFE which will run from October 2021 till December 2026. It has a budget of €5.7M to work to improve the condition of Natura 2000 sites, including the Tweed Estuary SAC and the Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast SAC.

Key issues which the project aims to address are:

- Elevated levels of nitrates and phosphates negatively impact water quality, and affect fresh water, coastal and marine habitats.
- Excessive macroalgae growth smothering intertidal biotopes including seagrass, which impacts a variety of ecosystem services, such as providing food for birds
- Growing recreational & visitor pressure especially on the coast is causing damage to habitats and disturbing sensitive bird species.
- Invasive alien species arrival of new species and persistence of established species threaten native species and sensitive habitats in riparian, coastal and marine areas.
- Lack of awareness of the inter connectivity between the river, coastal and marine habitats hamper long term conservation efforts

Planned activities include fencing along river corridors to improve water quality; a river restoration scheme at Harehope on Breamish; Modelling why areas like Budle Bay suffer from macro algae to better target interventions; working with partners on shorebird protection; and better surveillance and surveying of invasives in river, dune and marine habitats.

LS is keen to make links with other partners and initiatives. NB noted that the proposed work on invasives is relevant to the Marine Nature Partnership's emerging Marine INNS Strategy and would welcome further discussion.

A link to the presentation by LS will be circulated with the notes of the meeting.

7. Short Presentations from Members

North Sea Blue Carbon Mapping Project (Bex Lynam)

BL gave a presentation about the North Sea Blue Carbon Mapping Project. A link to the presentation will be circulated with the notes of the meeting.

The project undertook an assessment of carbon capture and storage in natural systems within the English North Sea. Project objectives included demonstrate the value and role well managed MPAs can play as a climate solution as well as increasing general resilience to climate impacts, and providing evidence provision to support future influencing at a local, regional and national level seeking to strengthen identification and management of MPAs.

The results of the project showed that carbon stocks in the English North Sea amount to nearly 20% of that held in UK forests and woodlands, the majority of which is stored in seabed sediments like sand and mud. There is a need to protect Blue Carbon habitats and to improve recognition of the importance of marine carbon. A [UK Blue Carbon Forum](#) has now been set up.

NIFCA Update (Alex Aitken)

A byelaw to prohibit scallop dredging within the NIFCA District is under consultation and the trawling byelaw covering the Coquet to St Mary's MCZ has been updated.

Work has continued this year to assess the impacts of intertidal fisheries. This has included work on periwinkle collection. No firm evidence of any impact from periwinkle collection has been found.

NIFCA have produced an [Angling Strategy](#) to improve communication with sea anglers.

NatureScot Update (Malcolm Fraser)

Elections to the Scottish Parliament were held in May. Following this a [Cooperation Agreement](#) has been signed by the SNP and the Scottish Greens. This covers a number of topics of relevance to marine conservation, including Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMA) and inshore fisheries protection in MPAs.

New funding strands are available which cover marine and coastal work, including the Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund (SMEEF).

Fifteen new areas have been identified as sites for offshore renewables.

Site condition monitoring for seals will be published soon. These do not include 2021 numbers.

Update from St Abbs Marine Station (Blair Easton)

BE gave an update on some of the research currently being carried out at the Marine Station:

- Sustainable fisheries, particularly:
 - A Baseline Assessment of the Intertidal Juvenile crab (*Cancer pagurus*) population in the Berwickshire Marine Reserve, Scotland
 - Distance and Directional Preference of lobster (*Homarus gammarus*) and crab in the Berwickshire Marine Reserve
 - PUE (Catch per Unit Effort) of the Local Inshore Fishermen in the Berwickshire Marine Reserve
 - Inter and Intra specific behaviours of lobster and crab in relation to fishing gear type
 - Size at Sexual Maturity of the Edible Crab
- European Lobster Habitats and Behaviour
- Research into the impacts of electromagnetic fields on elasmobranchs
- The WHERE project (Where Herring Eggs Reside) - a project looking for and mapping herring spawning grounds around the Berwickshire Marine Reserve. The aim is to develop low cost, simple monitoring methods to allow for larger scale monitoring of herring spawning grounds

Slides from the update will be circulated with the notes of the meeting.

8. Summing up (Jane Delany)

JD thanked everyone for their attendance and commented on the amount of very positive work that is happening on our coast.