



Berwickshire & Northumberland  
Marine Nature Partnership

## Steering Group Meeting 10.30am 21st March 2024 Virtual meeting

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

#### Attendees:

Nick Brodin	NB	Berwickshire and Northumberland MNP
Anne Brown	AB	NatureScot
Katy Smart (Chair)	KS	NIFCA
Catherine Scott	CS	Natural England
Natalie Wallace	NW	Environment Agency

#### Apologies:

Alex Aitken	AA	NIFCA
Malcolm Ginns	MG	Scottish Borders Council
David Feige	DF	Northumberland County Council

### 2. Minutes of last meeting

The actions from the last Steering Group in October 2023 were reviewed. Progress with action points is summarised in the attached table.

Action	Who	Status
Post Marine INNS Strategy on MNP website and circulate among members	NB	Complete
Share EA Beach Wash-Up App once it goes live	NW	Complete
Forward text of Annual Report to the Steering Group for sign-off prior to the annual partnership meeting on the 14 <sup>th</sup> December.	NB	Complete

NW shared the Beach Was-Up app. This will not be sent out to the general public but will only be used by groups or organisations helping with the project.

### **3. Partnership Officer Update**

A full written update was provided with the papers for the meeting. A brief summary of some of the main points is given below:

#### Championing Coastal Collaboration (3Cs) Regional Project

Three workshops were held in December and March to bring partners from Berwickshire and North East England together to discuss outcomes and actions for the coast. The information received is being reviewed and will form the basis of a draft Habitats Strategy which will be consulted on through the Coastal Network for Berwickshire and Northumberland.

#### Biosecurity Plan/Marine INNS Strategy

The Marine Nature Partnership is funding a Newcastle University Summer Internship examine the network of settlement panels which the University has in place at a number of harbours and marinas across North East England and Berwickshire. Applications will be reviewed in April with the intern starting work in June.

It was stated at a LIFE WADER event in February that the next iteration of the North East Invasive Species Strategy will include marine INNS. The regional group has been reached out to and a copy of our Marine INNS Strategy forwarded but no response has yet been received.

#### Citizen Science Activity

CoastSnap posts are now in place at Tweedmouth, Beadnell Bay (Long Nanny) and Amble (Coquet Estuary). Additional posts will be installed at Newbiggin by the Sea and Seaton Sluice soon. Signage has been commissioned and will be delivered at the end of the month.

The results of our work with Natural England to cross refer citizen science approaches to data gathering on Eider distribution (through our Eider Aware app) with aerial surveys has been written up as a Natural England Commissioned Report. There is no word yet as to when this will be published.

Two training sessions in rocky shore survey has delivered, one to volunteers from the St Mary's Island Wildlife Conservation Society and one for Natural England staff. The Project Officer has also carried out some monitoring visits across the winter.

### Outreach and engagement

Contact has been made with the Culture Team at Northumberland County Council about the possibility of creating an Artist in Residence post for one of our Marine Protected Areas. It is hoped that this may be a way of engaging with people who are not reached by more traditional nature conservation outreach activity and of raising the profile of the importance of our coast. An initial brief for the role has been drafted and is with the Culture Team for comment.

The Marine Nature Partnership is funding a Newcastle University Internship to review and index video footage from previous University research projects with the aim of identifying footage which can be used for public engagement or outreach purposes. The successful intern will be appointed in April and will start work in June.

We celebrated Eider Duck Day again this 20th March. The event was more low-key than in previous years due to time constraints and was held entirely online.

## **4. Partner Updates**

NatureScot: AB reported on the Scottish Marine Environment Enhancement Fund (SMEEF). Current funded projects include baseline mapping and site condition assessment of horse mussels by the Berwickshire Marine Reserve.

Environment Agency: NW updated on the beach wash-up project. A draft survey programme for 2024/25 has been produced. Saltmarsh surveys are planned but no seagrass surveys are scheduled. Also reported that it had not been possible to collect samples of blue mussel (as part of a project that CS is working on) because of the low numbers of mussel present on the coast.

Natural England: CS update the group on current work on blue mussels. There is a mixed story about the state of blue mussel populations depending on geography. The species seems to be doing badly at east coast locations. The cause of this has not been fully determined but declines on The Wash have been attributed to parasitic disease. St Abbs Marine Reserve is carrying out a DNA study on mussels looking for evidence of parasitic infection.

Awaiting confirmation of funding position and budget for surveys in 2024/25. Possible surveys of the Tweed Estuary SAC if money available.

NIFCA: KS reported that the MMO has introduced a byelaw prohibiting bottom trawling in the Farnes East MCZ. NIFCA have continued to carry out surveys of the blue mussel beds at Lindisfarne and on the Blyth Estuary. Declines have been found at all locations with particularly large declines found at Blyth.

## 5. Partnership finance and staffing

NB proposed that the next meeting of the Steering Group look solely at partnership finance and staffing. There are currently no issues with partnership finance but there has been a gradual decline in annual contributions over the last few years. The meeting could usefully review our current funding model and make any necessary amendments to ensure that our position remains healthy into the future.

This was agreed and it was suggested that the meeting be held in person rather than online. NB will organise. **ACTION NB**

## 6. AOB

NB reported that the Marine Nature Partnership's student bursary scheme will be launched soon and sought confirmation that the Steering Group were happy with the application form and associated materials.

A meeting of the MNP's Data, Monitoring and Research sub-group is overdue. NB will organise. **ACTION NB**

## 7. Table of actions from meeting

Action	Who	Status
NB to organise a face-to-face meeting on the Steering Group in the summer to discuss finance and staffing	NB	
NB to organise a meeting of the Data, Monitoring and Research subgroup	NB	