



Berwickshire & Northumberland
Marine Nature Partnership

Notes of Annual Partnership Meeting (held online)

14th December 2023

Present: Jane Delany – Chair (Newcastle University), Nick Brodin (Berwickshire and Northumberland Marine Nature Partnership), Alex Aitken (Northumberland IFCA), Iain Robson (Northumberland Coast AONB), Charlotte Keeley (Berwickshire Marine Reserve), Andy Ashcroft (Berwickshire Marine Reserve), Christine Bell (Eyemouth Harbour), Malcolm Ginns (Scottish Borders Council), Emily Ross (Stronger Shores Project), Erica Chapman (St Abbs Marine Reserve), Amy Fielding (Marine Management Organisation), Anthony Crook (Environment Agency)

Apologies: Duncan Hutt (Northumberland Wildlife Trust), David Feige (Northumberland County Council), Stuart Pudney (Northumbrian Water), Fiona Munro (Marine Directive, Scottish Government), Heather Harrison (Environment Agency), Andrew Craggs (Natural England), Paul Brown (North Sunderland Harbour Commission)

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

The notes from December 2022 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 the presentation can be found [HERE](#)

The work of the Marine Nature Partnership in 2023 has included:

- Further work with the Durham Heritage Coast Partnership looking at opportunities and priorities for the restoration of marine and coastal habitats. The works was funded through the Environment Agency's Championing Coastal Coordination (3Cs) fund and formed part of a larger national project led on by the Coastal Partnerships Network.
- Launch of our Wild Recreation Guide and of our Marine INNS Strategy.
- Continued work on our Eider Aware project and commencement of rocky shore monitoring project funded by Natural England

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. Update on the work of the Berwickshire Marine Reserve (Charlotte Keeley)

Charlotte Keeley gave an introduction to the [Berwickshire Marine Reserve](#) and its main work during 2023. The Reserve was set up in 1984 by local stakeholders to manage and conserve the marine environment. The Reserve is engaged in a wide range of Citizen Science activities. These including intertidal rocky shore monitoring, in which over 50 people have been trained in the last 4-years, a Beach Watch project which collects and monitors beach litter, and a Shore Watch project run with the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society. A Bioblitz held earlier in 2023 found over 350 different species in a 24-hour period. During the summer months, the BMR run a Marine Education Centre in Eyemouth Hippodrome. A range of school outreach activity is undertaken. This has included the development of a Climate Change and Ocean Literacy Toolkit. Project work undertaken this year has included a SMEEF-funded project to look at the presence of Horse Mussel beds within the reserve, a snorkelling project, and publication of Codes of Conduct.

A copy of the presentation can be found [HERE](#).

5. Breakout session: Future Priorities and Focus

Attendees were assigned to small groups in break out rooms and discussed their priorities and the ways in which the Marine Nature Partnership could help them with these. Feedback from each of the groups flagged a number of different issues including the importance of communication and networking, the potential impacts of new legislation and policy, and the importance of Citizen Science projects. Coordination

and engagement with and between Scottish partners was flagged as an issue. The recent publication of [Fisheries Management Plans](#) was also noted by one group.

6. Presentation about the Stronger Shores Project (Emily Ross, Project Delivery Officer)

[Stronger Shores](#) is a regional project, funded through Defra's Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme and hosted with South Tyneside Council. The project is looking at the potential use of seagrass, native oyster and kelp restoration as a tool in coastal flood defence. A key output from the project will be a toolkit about how nature-based solutions can benefit coast protection, climate change and biodiversity. Native oyster work is being undertaken with the Wild Oyster Project. As part of the seagrass work seed from Holy Island is being grown on at a seagrass nursery hosted by the Tees Rivers Trust on Teesside. As part of the project, Natural Capital Assessment of coastal habitats are being carried and a wide programme of public engagement is planned.

7. Short Presentations slots for Members

North Sunderland Harbour Commission update

North Sunderland Harbour Commission provided an update for the meeting via email:

“North Sunderland Harbour have an Interim Harbour Master while a full time HM is recruited. Paul Brown is the ex-Dover Harbour Master and is in the process of rewriting the ports safety management system and risk assessments as well as helping to update some of the procedures and practices. A Harbour Users Group will also be set up to allow all port stakeholders to have a voice.

3 of the North Sunderland Harbour Commissioners were recently elected bringing the total up to 9 and the Harbour Revision Order to update the ports powers will shortly be issued for public consultation. It is expected to have a full time HM in post by the early Summer 2024.”

Christine Bell – Eyemouth Harbour Trust update

A Strategic Review for the harbour is underway. There has been engagement with Scottish Borders Council and South Scotland Enterprise but a wider range of stakeholders are being reached out to. Anyone who would like further details please contact Christine. **Action All**

Alex Aitken – NIFCA Fisher Forum

NIFCA started holding Fisher Forums in 2022. The next event will be held in Eyemouth on the 9th January, with Marine Officers from Marine Scotland also attending. Alex will send details of the event to Christine Bell **Action Alex Aitken**

Jane Delany – Newcastle University/Dove Marine Laboratory

The Dove Marine Laboratory is undertaking a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for re-development and increased public engagement activity. As part of the bid development the University is collecting evidence of public perceptions of the Dove. A survey on this has been [widely distributed](#) and responses are invited from those present at the meeting **Action All**

Anthony Crook – update on Environment Agency surveys

Seagrass surveys, macro-algae monitoring, benthic invertebrate surveys have been carried out. Seagrass has been rediscovered at a historic site on the Coquet estuary during surveys. Saltmarsh surveys on the Tweed and modelling of nutrient inputs into coastal waters from the Tweed catchment are planned for 2024.

Erica Chapman – St Abbs Marine Station update

The St Abbs Marine Station are involved in a wide range of research projects. These include investigating the use of drones to assess fishing pressure and work with Natural England to investigate the causes of blue mussel decline at Lindisfarne.

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.