

Inter-Agency Committee on Marine Science and Technology

Minutes

Thirty-ninth Plenary Meeting held on Thursday 13th January 2005 from 1030 in Defra, Room 808, Nobel House, Smith Square, Westminster, London.

Present

Prof Howard Dalton, Defra, (Chair)
Dr Richard Briggs, DARDNI
Dr Robin Cook, FRS
Ms Theresa Crossley, (DfT)
Mr David Foskett, DTI (for Mr Graeme Cobb)
Dr Chris Gordon, Met Office (for Dr John Mitchell)
Dr John Lock, Defra
Dr Phil Newton, NERC
Mr David Palmer, EA
Mr Bob Simpson, HSE

Independent Members

Prof Mike Cowling
Mr Ian Townend

Secretariat

Dr John Portmann (for Trevor Guymmer)

Visitors

Mr John Roberts, Defra: for Item 3
Dr Lesley Rickards, BODC: for Item 5

Apologies

Dr Graham Bryce, OST
Dr Bruce Callander, MOD
Mr Graeme Cobb, DTI
Mr Martin Fidler, FCO
Mr Trevor Guymmer, IACMST Secretary
Prof Peter Liss, Independent Member
Dr John Mitchell, Met Office
Ms Alison Wall, EPSRC

Apologies

The acting Secretary read out the list of apologies received. He explained that he was acting for Trevor Guymmer who was not attending in order to be able to represent the Committee at the funeral of Mrs Sylvia Allison which was taking place that day. Mrs Allison had served the Committee for almost ten years as assistant, first to David Pugh and more recently to Trevor in their roles as Secretary to the Committee. The Committee agreed that a note of appreciation of Mrs Allison's loyal and valuable service should be recorded in the minutes.

Minutes of the Thirty-eighth Meeting (Thursday, 16th September, 2004)

These were approved subject to one correction under item 4.2. The UK modelling strategy initiative had been proposed by the GOOSAG not MEDAG.

Actions

All actions had been completed and would be reported on under either matters arising or under specific Agenda items.

Matters Arising

Marine Bioresources

1.1 Phil Newton reported that he, Robin Cook and John Lock had attended an open meeting on this subject in Edinburgh on 22nd September. It had been decided that the best way to take matters forward would be undertake detailed scoping study of providers and stake-holder views. This

would be led by the Director of GLOBEC working half-time as a consultant starting in April. Representatives of SEERAD, FRS, NERC and Defra and an independent adviser from BAS would assist the study. The Terms of Reference have been posted on the NERC website and are targeted at identifying new science requisites and it will then be for potential funders to indicate interest. An update on progress will be provided at the next plenary meeting in May.

Action Phil Newton

MarinERA

1.2 The first meeting of this EU Coordination Action had been held at the French Ministry for Research on 17th December and was attended by Phil Newton and Trevor Guymmer. The objective is to promote seriously funded cross-national issues. The involvement and interest of IACMST had been much appreciated as the only cross-departmental national representation. Initiatives that are proceeding include CRUE – flooding version of ERANET with 12 partners. A proposal on Marine Fisheries (MariFish) involving 16 partners whose annual allocation to marine fisheries research amounted to 125 million Euros just failed to gain approval but is being revamped and is likely to be approved at the next round. AMPERA involves networking in the event of a major marine pollution incident has been approved for funding. The UK might not have been involved in this latter activity if it had not been for expression of interest by IACMST. The Committee would be kept informed of developments by Phil Newton who would continue to represent UK interests.

Action Phil Newton

IACMST Retreat

1.3 The Chairman reported that enquiries as to possible venues and dates for this event had been made but that the preferred venue (Dartington Hall) was not available on either of the selected dates. Sedgebrook Hall (Nr Northampton) was available on both dates but Urchfont Manor (Nr Devises) was only available 6-8 July and Guyers House (Nr Bath) was only available 2-4 August. After a brief discussion which confirmed the desirability of holding a retreat it was agreed that the Secretary should be asked to make the necessary arrangements with Urchfont Manor being the preferred venue because of its dates of availability. (**Note** Since confirmed, arrival pre-lunch 6th depart by midday 8th July.)

1.4 Discussion then turned to possible keynote speakers and the basic theme of the retreat. Several speaker suggestions were made and the acting secretary undertook to relay these ideas on to the Secretary. The theme of the meeting would centre around “ Where is IACMST going, why does it need to adjust and what role might it play in relation to the Marine Bill.” It was agreed the Chairman would discuss these issues further with the Secretary and that the number of participants should be held at about 30 persons.

Action Chairman and Secretary

2 Underwater Noise and Marine Life Working Group

2.1 In accordance with the decision made at the previous meeting this working group had been established under the chairmanship of Prof Peter Liss and had held its first meeting on 13th December. In the absence of Peter Liss, David Palmer reported that the meeting had been lively and broad ranging. It had been agreed the working group should concentrate on factual rather than anecdotal information. It had clearly emerged that reported background levels of noise were increasing but that information on behavioural responses was less readily available. A timetable

had been set which envisaged information gathering being completed by 3rd March, with tentative conclusions drawn by 20th April and completion of a report by 29th July. The proposed focus and timetable were endorsed by the Committee, members of which drew attention to various sources of information.

2.2 In response to an observation by the Chairman about lack of oil industry involvement David Foskett undertook to investigate whether a suitable representative could be found to serve on the working group but would in any case seek out and make available any relevant information. Bob Simpson indicated that the International Oil and Gas Association have a standing Committee that addresses the noise issue and could probably serve as a source of information. Ian Townend indicated that the US Corps of Engineers had considerable information on noise arising from dredging and pile driving. David Foskett also suggested that the Renewable Power Association might be able to provide information on underwater noise generated by wind turbines, noting that it was likely to be long lasting and continuous albeit at lower intensity than some other sources.

Action David Foskett and Secretary

2.3 The Committee noted that it was important to have NGO involvement and questioned whether the one representative NGO member would be acting as a sector representative. It was suggested that the Secretary should check with Mellissa Moore of MCS as to whether the Wildlife and Countryside Link wish to nominate an additional member to serve in this capacity. David Foskett indicated that DTI had a meeting scheduled with NGOs to discuss inter alia noise issues and would also make that suggestion on that occasion.

Action Secretary and David Foskett

2.4 John Roberts noted that the study was particularly timely as both the EU and OSPARCOM were investigating underwater noise and may as a result make proposals to control it.

3 The Marine Bill

3.1 This item had been placed on the Agenda following repeated suggestions that a Marine Bill was likely to be introduced. John Roberts had agreed to attend the meeting to provide some facts in order to allow the Committee to form a judgement as to whether it should seek to be involved and if so what role it might most usefully play during the preparatory process and in the future.

3.2 John Roberts explained that a series of reviews of marine policy in relation e.g. Nature Conservation, Marine Consents, Fisheries and the Environment and the recent report by the RCEP, had all concluded that there was much going on and in place but a certain lack of joined upness. The Prime Minister had identified the problem as an issue requiring attention and Defra was in the process of developing proposals for consideration in the next parliament. The overall aim would be to achieve sustainable use of marine resources whilst ensuring that conservation interests are protected. One approach being investigated was the extent to which marine spatial planning might serve to resolve the conflicts of interest that often arise and a contract for a pilot study had been placed with ABPmer to address this. The Defra proposals would take account of the pending State of the seas report and the EU Marine Strategy proposals expected in the coming summer. A Marine Agency was under consideration and would serve to separate operational from policy issues and might well take on responsibility for marine information. The Committee noted this information with considerable interest and agreed the progress of the Marine Bill should form a specific agenda item at future meetings.

3.3 Preliminary observations made were that IACMST should play a proactive role rather than simply be reactive. It was noted that the likely timetable would involve submission of a draft Bill soon after the election with a probable new Act in place by November 2006. Questions were raised as to the extent to which the proposed Marine Bill would involve and impact on the devolved administrations and what steps would be taken to ensure that the new Act would not risk overturning decisions already taken e.g. in relation to wind farms. It was pointed out that spatial planning was a useful concept but involved socio-economic issues. John Roberts accepted these various points would have to be considered but in relation to the latter pointed out that European Law already accepts that in situations where interests conflict it is the greater public interest that should prevail.

3.4 Ian Townend asked if any decisions had been taken as to where monitoring of the marine environment would fit into the Marine Bill. John Roberts responded that this had not been decided but that one possibility was that the Marine Agency might act as custodian of the data.

3.5 In concluding the discussion it was agreed that in addition to being a regular agenda item at future meetings it would be useful to hold a break-out session on the Marine Bill and IACMST's involvement at the proposed retreat in July.

Action Secretary

4 GOOSAG Annual Report and Forward Look

4.1 The Chairman of the Action Group, Ian Townend, highlighted aspects of the written report on past activities and proposals for future activities. During the past year notable achievements had included acceptance of the proposed modelling initiative and a National Centre for Ocean Forecasting would be based at the Met Office but would involve POL, SOC and ESSC plus potentially other interested users and providers of data. This would formally be launched in March.

4.2 Deployment of Argo floats was continuing according to schedule and the value of the data in improving accuracy of forecasts had been convincingly demonstrated, though concerns remained as to future funding of the on-going operational programme. This had been included in the AG's contribution to the IACMST's bid for long-term funding.

4.3 The Eftec report on Economics of Sustained Marine Measurements had been published in both hard copy and website versions. Direct contributions to the State of the Seas report had been made in the form of the Marine Processes and Climate report which had been reviewed and accepted by a workshop early in 2004. A copy of this report is available in interactive form on the AG's website and will be made available in hard copy format and a pdf version will be posted on the Defra website when the State of the Seas Report is published in March. The contribution made by David Pugh in steering the report and its conclusions through the State of the Seas process was particularly noteworthy.

4.4 An open meeting had been held in November on the design of monitoring programmes and the report of the meeting is accessible on the AG's website. The meeting had concluded that the importance of long-term data sets was increasingly being recognised but that greater care needed to be paid to reporting why it is as important to be able to show no change as it is to be able to show change and also to be able to explain why such change or lack of change is occurring. More

attention needs to be paid to establishing objectives and indicators and better use should be made of new technologies.

4.5 In this latter context Ian Townend drew attention to the support the Action Group is giving to the formation of EuroACT as an initiative that will benefit those involved in planning and undertaking GOOS related activities by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of various measuring and monitoring devices.

4.6 So far as future activities were concerned these were listed in the written report but attention was drawn particularly to the intended review and update of the MPC Action plan and a review of the four sector Action plans as a basis for formulating a UK strategy and in particular formulating the coordination of the UK contribution to GOOS. In addition steps would be taken to develop suitable indicators of state for a range of MPC parameters and protocols would be drawn up for sampling, analysis and data archiving for key MPC parameters.

4.7 The chairman thanked Ian Townend for his report and asked for comments. John Lock sought confirmation that funding was adequate for the proposed programme of work. This was duly given but it was noted that it remained uncertain whether funds are adequate for all the actual monitoring currently required and likely to be demanded. John Roberts noted that this was not uniquely a problem for the UK but was increasingly being recognised across Europe. On the question of whether a new MPC report ought to be contemplated it was agreed any such report should take account of timing of the next OSPAR QSR and the EU Marine Strategy Report both likely in 2010. It should also seek wider input and coverage of additional parameters and assess the results against defined and agreed objectives/ indicators.

4.8 The Committee approved the report and the work plan for 2005.

5 MEDAG Annual Report and Forward Look

5.1 This Report was presented by Lesley Rickards. She outlined the main activities and achievements for 2004; these included production and distribution of publicity material (mousemat and brochures); significant updating of the UK cruise inventory (now including electronic versions of about 2500 cruise reports; active membership of a variety of national and international data management groups; provision of temperature and salinity data to global data sets; responding to enquiries and developing the web-site and Adobe Acrobat pdf version of the Marine Processes and Climate Report.

5.2 Looking to activities for 2005 she noted that the priority tasks were: a major review and upgrade of OceanNET website; production of regular articles/news items; major update to the UK Directory of Marine Environmental Data; updating the Inventory of Marine Monitoring Measurements; production of the current meter data DVD; collaboration with GOOSAG, including input to GOOSAG Action Plan; keeping abreast of Marine XML developments; participation in European marine data management projects; collaboration with the Marine Data and Information Partnership and holding a Marine Samples Workshop.

5.3 The Chairman thanked Lesley Rickards for her report and invited comment. Some discussion took place relating to the proposed European Parliament INSPIRE directive, and taking into account the letters sent to the EU by EuroGOOS and EUMETNET, and other discussions within Defra, Met Office, UKHO, etc., it was agreed that the Secretary would contact those who had already written letters and/or expressed concern. He should then draft a letter for

the Chairman to send to the Chief Scientist. This should take into account what had already been said, and, in particular, note that we did not want to reinvent the wheel or cause departments extra expenditure.

Action Secretary and Chairman

5.4 John Lock raised a question in relation to continuing to raise the profile of the MEDAG activity, especially knowing who the OceanNET users are and their requirements. Lesley Rickards replied that user information is logged, but once the site has been reviewed and revised, this will be undertaken in more detail. Bob Hoskins asked about Wind Farm data: in the past HSE have collected data including seismic surveys, which was probably not known about and work may be repeated unnecessarily.

5.6 Mike Cowling noted that the final version of the Marine Data and Information Review Report and the Marine Data and Information Partnership report had been delivered to IACMST. Defra have provided some short term funding and a coordinator, Nick Birula (on secondment from the EA), has been appointed. Over the next 3 months he will develop a business plan, a one year work plan and consider longer term sustainability of the activity. Defra are looking to other departments and agencies to contribute funding to continue this over the year.

5.7 Mike Cowling introduced the issue of a MEDAG review. It was agreed that the Secretary would set up a review group under the Chairmanship of David Palmer. In addition to reviewing MEDAG, this would also look at the relationship between MEDAG and MDIP.

5.8 The Committee approved the MED Annual Report and work plan for 2005.

6 Chairman's Vision for IACMST

6.1 The Chairman introduced his paper on this subject, which he had prepared in consultation with the Independent members and the Secretary. The paper basically expanded the ideas he had outlined at the previous meeting. His aim was to raise the profile of IACMST to give it more credibility and thus allow it to gain more support and enable it to fund more work. Ideally he would like to see IACMST acting and being regarded rather like the RCEP but acting as a bridge between policy and Science. To do this effectively IACMST must seek to focus its activities on a few key issues championing certain areas of work and promoting joined up action. To achieve this it would be desirable to broaden the membership and provide extra resources for the Secretary's office. Good examples of the way forward were he felt the current focus on underwater noise and the suggestion that IACMST should play a proactive role in the development of the Marine Bill. The proposed retreat in the summer would provide an excellent opportunity to explore and develop these ideas further but he would welcome immediate reactions from the Committee members.

6.2 Chris Gordon welcomed the paper and indicated he agreed with much of it. It was becoming increasingly apparent that no one organisation could cope effectively on its own and needed to cooperate with others. This implied better organisation and coordination and perhaps a scoping study of which areas required priority attention. David Palmer also expressed firm support. He had already detected a change in the way IACMST worked in a more proactive way and would welcome further moves in that direction. He suggested it was highly desirable that commercial interests be recognised but any such involvement must not be on an individual basis but should represent whole sectors.

6.3 John Lock expressed some concern about where IACMST might stand if its conclusions on an issue were to conflict with Departmental views. Mike Cowling felt this was unlikely to be a problem if IACMST focussed on challenges for the future. Phil Newton added his voice to those in favour and urged that IACMST carefully select worthwhile activities to pursue. He pointed out that current action on underwater noise and the spending review bid were very different but equally relevant and worthwhile issues. He felt the whole concept of change was welcome and indicated how valuable the proposed retreat would be in clarifying the directions and processes by which future efforts could best be achieved.

6.4 Robin Cook also supported the proposed changes and suggested that a careful look at the terms of reference of the Committee would be appropriate. This raised the question of exactly what the current terms of reference are and it appeared there was some uncertainty as to the accuracy of those on the website. This in turn raised the point that the website was somewhat dated and should be improved. The Chairman indicated that if this were indeed the case he might be able to find some funds to support the work provided a request were submitted quickly.

Action Secretary

6.5 In concluding the discussion the Chairman welcomed the support his ideas had received. He would work further on the subject with the Secretary and looked forward to the discussions that would take place at the retreat. In the meantime he would welcome any particular ideas members may wish to propose in writing.

Action Members and Chairman/Secretary

7 Spending Review Bid -Update

7.1 The Secretary had prepared a progress report on the development of the bid for long-term funding, the concept of which had been approved at the previous meeting. Members welcomed progress and suggested a number of points needed clarification and certain emphases might improve the chances of success. It was agreed that Defra would probably be the best lead Department but it would need to be clarified in advance how this would affect access to any funds secured by organisations normally funded via the devolved administrations. If this proved to be a problem NERC might be an alternative lead. It was suggested that it would probably be advantageous to pitch the bid within the context of wider international involvement rather simply listing programmes we would like to see continued. It was also noted that overall design of programmes should receive more attention.

7.2 The Chairman welcomed the positive support and proposed that the Secretary continue his work supported by a small group of particularly interested members. The aim would be to expand the high level need, make the bid concise overall and spell out why the bid was directed at big overall programmes involving cross-departmental interests.

Action Secretary plus selected members

8 Any Other Business

8.1 The only issue raised under this item was a mention of a meeting due to be held the following week of a new Task Force on the Asian Tsunami. This had been established jointly by

Defra and DfID and would focus on what assistance could be given to fisheries interests in the area, especially artisanal fisheries.

9 Closure of the Meeting

9.1 In the absence of any further business the Chairman formally closed the meeting. The acting secretary drew members' attention to the date of the May meeting which had been changed to 24th May and asked that they make any necessary correction in their diaries. He also noted that the September meeting was scheduled for 22nd September. (**Note: Since changed to 13th September**)

Action List

Action No.	Action	Agenda	Action Required by
1	Provide progress report on Marine Bioresources scoping study	1.1	Phil Newton
2	Keep committee informed of future MarinERA developments	1.2	Phil Newton
3	IACMST Retreat – develop programme	1.4	Chairman/Secretariat
4	Underwater Noise Working Group – identify oil industry representative	2.2	David Foskett/Secretariat
5	Underwater Noise Working Group - approach Wildlife & Countryside Link re representation	2.3	David Foskett/Secretariat
6	Marine Bill – timetable a break out session at retreat	3.5	Secretariat
7	INSPIRE – send letter to Chief Scientist	5.3	Secretariat/Chairman
8	Chairman's vision for IACMST – write letter to Chairman with plans/costing for improvement of website	6.4	Secretariat
9	Chairman's Vision for IACMST – identify additional ideas to incorporate in the vision	6.5	Members/Secretariat/Chairman
10	Spending review bid-update	7.2	Secretariat/selected members