

Summary of First IACMST Underwater Sound Forum Meeting

Monday 4 December 2006

IMarEST, London

The first IACMST Underwater Sound Forum meeting was held on the 4 December 2006 with 19 persons attending. The Chairman, Peter Liss, welcomed everybody and invited members to introduce themselves and the interests they represented. He then outlined the pattern of the day, which was built around consideration of the recommendations from the IACMST report on Underwater Sound and Marine Life (see Annex 1), together with the notes of the discussion at the science meeting held on 9 October 2006. The recommendations implied quite a lot of work during coming months and he urged the sub-groups to consider priorities for initial focus.

It was agreed that a report of the first Forum would be placed on the IACMST website. The meeting then split into two nearly equal groups, one considering the recommendations towards the science end of the spectrum (1-4), the other looking at the more policy-related issues associated with recommendations 5-8. It should be noted that this meeting constituted the start of the implementation of Recommendation 9 (to establish a Discussion Forum).

Science sub-group

All four recommendations were discussed and some specific actions resulted as listed below.

Recommendation 1

Members were updated on two particular areas of current work.

Actions:

- Distribute report by ESF Marine Board for internal use only (Ian Boyd via Trevor Guymer)
- Trevor Guymer to circulate the web address for information on the activities funded by the Joint Industry Programme. This is www.soundandmarinelife.org

Recommendation 2

The value of Limited Exposure Experiments and Behavioural Response Studies was debated. The former has the relative advantage that the scientist controls the sound source. A general observation was that activities to promote wider information exchange and outreach were important; it was noted that Olive Heffernan of IMarEST was writing an article on underwater sound and marine life for *Marine Scientist*.

Recommendation 3

Together with Recommendation 4 this provides a useful separation of the effects of ambient noise mapping (and related propagation issues) from that of source characterisation. Assessing whether sound levels really are increasing would require a very comprehensive monitoring activity to be undertaken with standardised equipment. (The idea of adding acoustic monitoring to existing programmes was also raised later on in the meeting.)

Recommendation 4

Work on this has been undertaken within the different sectors but doubts exist over the availability of protocols.

- Action: where protocols for processing and storage of data exist then metadata inventories should be compiled. Where protocols do not exist then consider how to establish them.

Policy sub-group

Recommendations 5-8 were divided into two elements, one where progress was relatively easy to identify, the other where it would take rather longer, e.g. because of the dependence on other

parties or the intrinsic difficulty of the issue. Only those aspects falling into the first grouping were discussed further at this meeting.

Recommendation 5

Actions:

- Define what we mean by “tools, technology and databases”
- Request selected organisations to provide information on the availability of these tools, technology and databases (including any barriers to availability)

Geraint West/Rolly Rogers to take lead, with input from the other members of the Policy subgroup plus Ian Boyd). Draft to be available for circulation to members by end Feb 2007 and approval at next meeting of Forum ready for issue. The intention is to conduct a gap analysis on the returns.

Recommendation 6(a)

This excludes consideration of future amendments but includes legislation already in progress.

Actions:

- Relevant information to be placed on secure area of website, e.g. the PowerPoint presentations by Daniel Owen and Karen Scott from 9 October meeting (Trevor Guymer/Gaynor Evans)
- List relevant conventions and the instruments within them that have potential relevance to regulation of underwater sound (Lead: Rolly Rogers)
- Produce strawman document on Forum’s understanding of how existing legislation applies (Lead: Andy Tate) (end Feb) ready for approval at next meeting of Forum.

The intention is to circulate to all member departments of IACMST to establish a consensus view and identify possible conflicts.

Plenary discussion

As there had been some overlaps in the work of the two subgroups it was agreed that discussions at the next meeting could all be in plenary and that the actions under 4 and 5 could be combined.

The provisional agenda for the next meeting was therefore agreed as:

1. Presentations on:
 - ESF Marine Board Report (Ian Boyd)
 - Joint Industry programme (John Campbell)Both to include suggestions on how UK might best contribute
2. Discussion of strawman on tools and protocols (Geraint West)
 - The aim is to agree contents before sending out to organisations
3. Discussion of strawman on existing conventions (Rolly Rogers/Andy Tate)
 - The aim is to agree contents before sending out to organisations

Date of next meeting

27 March, 1030 – 1530. Venue: IMarEST, London

AOB

No funding has been identified to run the Forum. The main need is to pay the cost of meetings (room hire, refreshments, etc). It would be helpful if an official request from IACMST could be sent to each organisation, making clear who else had been asked.

Trevor Guymer

Annex 1

AIMS OF EACH SESSION

Plenary Session 10.30 – 11.15

Review relevant points from 9 October conference and exchange other information, which may have a bearing on the work of the Forum.

Working Groups 11.15 – 12.30

For each recommendation, elaborate what is meant, what activities are required to take them forward, and where they should be directed.

Science Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: A more detailed study should be made to produce a research strategy for the effects of underwater sound on marine life, from a UK perspective. This should include consideration of both inputs and impacts.

Recommendation 2: To authorize through the appropriate authorities the careful and well-planned use of Controlled Exposure Experiments, which have the potential to yield much needed quantifiable information on the effects of different sound sources on marine animals.

Recommendation 3: To better inform the framing of future regulation, systematic and comprehensive mapping of noise in the ocean at appropriate space/time resolution needs to be undertaken.

Recommendation 4: In consultation with stakeholders, Government needs to establish standardised protocols for testing the extent to which sources radiate sound in the marine environment. This needs to include a system for depositing data in appropriate formats so that they can be used in future models predicting ambient noise in the oceans.

Policy Recommendations:

Recommendation 5: That relevant tools, technology and databases be shared via appropriate Government incentives.

Recommendation 6: The applicability of existing regulations and treaties for protection of the environment in general and the marine environment specifically to cover underwater sound should be investigated. Where necessary, amendments should be proposed.

Recommendation 7: The UK, with EU and international partners where appropriate, should build a modern, regulatory, risk-based framework relating to noise in the marine environment, based on existing legislation and the application of the precautionary principle. Its purpose should be to provide agreed impact/harm criteria, eliminate confusions over terminology, and enable more consistent mitigation measures.

Recommendation 8: A Marine Environmental Noise Assessment for UK waters should be undertaken and permits for activities that generate noise should be issued within it.

Working Groups 13.15 – 14.00

Complete pre-lunch objectives and then consider what additional activities should be undertaken by these groups (beyond the original recommendations).

Plenary Session 14.00 – 15.00

Receive feedback from Working Groups, discuss and agree actions/timetable. Discuss working arrangements and topics for future meetings of Forum. Date/s of next meeting/s.