

Inter-Agency Committee on Marine Science and Technology

Minutes

Thirty-sixth Plenary Meeting held on Thursday 15 January 2004 from 10.30 in Defra, Room 101, Whitehall Place East, London.

<p>Present: Prof Howard Dalton, Defra (Chair) Dr Graham Bryce, OST Dr Ivan Heaney, DARDNI Dr John Lock, Defra Dr John Mitchell, Met Office Dr Phil Newton, NERC Mr David Palmer, Environment Agency Mr Bob Simpson, HSE Dr Bill Turrell, Scottish Executive FRS (for Robin Cook)</p> <p>Independent Members: Prof Mike Cowling Prof Peter Liss Mr Ian Townend</p>	<p>Secretariat: Mr Trevor Guymer</p> <p>Visitors: Dr John Portmann: for Item 4 Dr Lesley Rickards: for Item 5 Mr John Roberts: for Item 5</p> <p>Apologies: Dr Bruce Callander, MoD Dr Robin Cook, Scottish Executive FRS Dr Peter Hedges, EPSRC</p>
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Minutes of the Thirty-fifth Meeting (18 September 2003)

These minutes were approved subject to two corrections one being to the item on the CREST Marine Working Group and the other the Jason-2 item.

Actions

All four actions were reviewed and had been satisfactorily completed. Two of the items were dealt with under Matters Arising.

Matters Arising

ESF Marine Board

1.1 Discussion at the last meeting had lacked a definite conclusion. Professor Minster and Dr Vallerga had both been contacted to thank them for their presentation and to say that we wished to continue the dialogue and both responded positively. Chair invited comments on the presentation that had been made at the previous meeting.

1.2 Mike Cowling raised the issue that we ought to couple into our thinking the Framework Programme 7, which was now being discussed in Brussels. Phil Newton drew attention of the meeting to a Eurocean Meeting in Galway in May and said that that meeting was bound to consider Framework 7 as well. Peter Liss asked whether the three issues that had been identified in the papers for the meeting about future progress on the Marine Board were just vague ideas or whether there was something of substance here. Phil Newton said that these were areas that were known to be difficult by the Marine Board but there was a real intention to do something to try and advance this. He had a suggestion that there should be a pulling together of what the CREST Marine Working Group was doing into an overarching ERANET. The Marine Board had failed last time at bidding for an ERANET but would be willing to co-ordinate such an overarching activity. Phil Newton had attended a meeting in

Brussels aimed at producing an overarching ERANET. It consisted at the moment of 12 partners with potential for 29 altogether. NERC will be responsible for one work package focused on developing joint programmes. He suggested that IACMST itself might become a member of this proposed ERANET. He also pointed out that at the moment there were insufficient representatives of funding agencies on the Marine Board and this led to a discussion about the UK representation. The basis for this was reiterated: each country could have up to two representatives, the idea being one should be from a funding agency the other the head of a research institution. Within the UK Phil Newton represented a funding agency and Howard Roe was the Director of Southampton Oceanography Centre. NERC paid the UK subscription in total and so this at the moment determined the representation of the UK on this Board.

1.3 It was agreed that IACMST supported NERC's involvement in the ERANET. The question of whether Defra should be involved was raised and would be pursued after the meeting. Phil Newton took an action to circulate reports of future Marine Board meetings; where appropriate he would also seek IACMST input on any future agenda items of Marine Board meetings as relevant.

Action: NERC

CREST Marine Working Group

1.4 Phil Newton introduced this item by referring to the call for proposals under the international RAPID project. Thirty four outline bids had been received. He then went on to talk about the ERANET on marine pollution. There had been a meeting in Madrid in October. The interested UK bodies had been consulted prior to that meeting. A report of the meeting exists. Paul Leonard was taking the lead for Defra and was attending a meeting in Madrid the day of the Plenary and was trying to see whether Defra should in fact be involved in this ERANET and maybe take the lead. John Lock then said that there had been some concern expressed at the feedback meeting in London shortly following the Madrid meeting and in particular there were concerns about what implications this might have for the independence of the UK. Chair requested John Lock to seek a report from Paul Leonard.

Action: Defra

1.5 Finally under this item Phil Newton referred to Minute 1.4 which was on the NERC RAPID programme and the presentation by Meric Srokosz. There had been some recent developments following the Horizon programme. As a result Defra have organised a meeting to review the situation regarding the slow down of the thermohaline circulation and its possible effects on European climate. This meeting will take place on 23 January. David Warrilow was taking the lead for Defra.

2 Secretary's Report on Visits to Member Departments

2.1 Secretary briefly introduced his report drawing attention to the opportunity that existed to change the nature of IACMST's activities. The discussion started with Peter Liss outlining the United Nation's Global Marine Assessment process that was being planned. It emerged that most people round the table were unaware of this. For the UK Chris Tompkins of Defra was leading. Peter Liss also alluded to the role of the IPCC as a useful justification to help set up the Hadley Centre and wondered the GMA process might help similarly for

marine activities. Secretary had information on GMA presented at the IOC Assembly and would circulate documents electronically. Ivan Heaney referred to a SCOR meeting and also activities undertaken by the Census of Marine Life and asked whether there was any duplication. John Mitchell agreed that IPCC had had a big influence and had changed the views of sceptics. Ian Townend asked whether structures were in place for the GMA. Peter Liss said it was not clear which Agency would take the lead for the UK (for IPCC it had been the UKMO). John Mitchell suggested that it was necessary to alert people about the significant changes which took place in the oceans. The US drought of 1988 had been a key factor in setting up IPCC.

Action: Secretary

2.2 Chair's view was that the issues raised in the Secretary's report were important. Should IACMST just maintain its present role? Should we be involved in horizon scanning? Defra had been undertaking such activities but Government was likely to turn to IACMST for its views. David Palmer stated that in the recent reorganisation of EA marine issues had not been high on the agenda and were becoming diffuse. It would be very helpful if IACMST could raise the MST profile. His own group within EA had set up a horizon scanning team which included a member of MEDAG. John Lock indicated that there was much to learn from the Defra Horizon Scanning process both in putting scientists together and from the policy people who were assessing the threats. IACMST could bring both of these groups together. He referred to the IACMST away W/E in Wales (Gregynog, July 2000), which might be worth repeating. Others agreed this had been worthwhile, though it had never been followed up.

Action: Secretariat

2.3 Graham Bryce confirmed that there were no cross-cutting bids in marine science in the next tranche of SR bids. Several mechanisms were possible. The next SR opportunity was 2006 and outline ideas would be needed at the end of 2004.

2.4 Chair thanked Secretary for his report and requested that it be taken forward further at the next meeting.

3 Fisheries-related Research

3.1 This was raised under AOB last time and provoked interest. It was agreed to put it on the agenda of this meeting by which time NERC Council would have met. Secretary had also contacted the PMSU whose report on Fisheries was about to be published. Although PMSU were unable to attend this time it was likely that they would be able to participate in the May Plenary. John Lock had been involved with the PMSU report and outlined the issues it was likely to cover. He could see several areas in which IACMST might become involved, eg cross-institutional research on climate change impacts. The main response to the Report was expected to be from individual departments. However, given that 4 or 5 of these were represented around the table there was scope for IACMST to play a strong role. There was a need for different underpinning science which brought marine science and fisheries science together and moved the debate away from a stock assessment approach which wasn't going to provide all the answers.

3.2 Phil Newton reported that NERC Council had agreed that a proposal on this topic could go forward for further consideration by SISB. The issue would also be considered at the 6-monthly meetings of heads of fish labs.

Action: Secretary

4 Report for 2003 of GOOS Action Group; Proposals for 2004

4.1 Ian Townend highlighted aspects of the written report of past activities and proposals for future activities under three headings.

GOOS

As usual, the Group had helped to brief the UK delegation to I-GOOS and IOC, and the Coordinator had participated in both assemblies as well as the circulating bulletins and technical reports. An international group had undertaken a review of GOOS structure and an Intersessional WG of which the UK was a member was considering its recommendations and implementation. One issue was the respective roles of I-GOOS and JCOMM. GOOSAG was concerned at the insufficient level of feedback from JCOMM WGs having UK membership. The preparation of a strategy for the UK contribution to GOOS, which had been approved as a 2003 activity, had been deferred because it was considered more important first of all to formulate the MPC input to the wider marine monitoring strategy called for by Defra. Apart from editing, this report was completed by end 2003 and building on this, GOOSAG intends to use a consultant to develop the UK GOOS Strategy. The system for annually updating national contributions to GOOS was suspended by the international GPO but is expected to resume shortly via a web-based system.

Coordination

Working with MEDAG GOOSAG web pages had been placed on the OceanNET website and leaflets were being produced describing the work of both Action Groups, the intention being to distribute them at Oceanology 2004. In collaboration with Defra two activities were underway, one to provide the MPC contribution to the UK strategy for marine monitoring, the other to provide part of the input to the 2004 State of the Seas report. The former would need to be kept under review, particularly when integrated with other sector input and also in the light of likely changes in the UKMO's programme. The latter would be an update of the GOOSAG Ocean Climate Status Report and would be reviewed at a meeting on 19 February prior to submission.

Other activities

GOOSAG had played a role in helping to secure funding for Jason-2, including the commissioning of an economic study to be published as an IACMST report as well as on the website, and was monitoring progress with Argo. An implementation plan had been completed for a UK modelling strategy and this formed part of the MPC Action Plan. A meeting had also been held on RS and in situ measurements; a report would be available soon on the website. Future plans called for better integration of nearshore and offshore bathymetry and this would be pursued with MEDAG. It was also intended to develop a case for funding long-term observations, something which had also been highlighted in the Secretary's report. Liaison was being established with EuroACT with the suggestion that PML would be an independent testing base for EuroACT.

Budgets were already in place for 2004 but there were some uncertainties over funding for future years.

4.2 Chair thanked the GOOSAG chair for his report and asked for comments prior to accepting the report. Regarding EuroACT David Palmer suggested that a copy of the EuroGOOS Technology WG report be sent to Richard Burt. John Lock expressed the view that the modelling document was very interesting and that it might provide a test bed for storing and sharing data. (Mike's Report?). However, Ian Townend pointed out that there was a subtle difference. GOOSAG had been addressing real-time data which was different from the remit of MEDAG. There was some concern among funders that decisions might be taken out of their hands. In reply to questions from Peter Liss on I-GOOS with the departure of Colin Summerhayes as Director of the GOOS Project Office, Secretary replied that plans for replacing him were well advanced. He agreed this was a crucial appointment.

Action: Secretariat

4.3 In answering questions on the economic study Ian Townend stated that the main point was to establish the minimum benefit. Once this had been achieved there was no need to be more sophisticated in providing further justification. He accepted that the coastal study was less complete and should be regarded as a good first step. Bob Simpson agreed it was very difficult to obtain the corporate value and cost. Graham Bryce asked about the usage of the website and suggested efforts be made to publicise it. It was agreed that the Executive Summary of the economic study would be circulated to members.

Action: Secretariat

5 Report for 2003 of MED Action Group; Proposals for 2004

5.1 The report was presented by the MED Coordinator Lesley Rickards who reported progress under 4 main headings: raising visibility of MED activities, data catalogues and inventories, data management and exchange, and coastal data activities.

Raising visibility

Through employment of a consultant for part of the year the OceanNET website had been further developed and the activities of MEDAG had been promulgated via a variety of newsletter, attendance of appropriate meetings and establishing links with other websites. Dr Rickards requested information on in-house brochures that could be used could be used to publicise MEDAG.

Data catalogues and inventories

These were only of value if they were reasonably comprehensive and kept up to date. Organisations tended to be enthusiastic until they had to submit something. Information provided regularly by the FCO on cruises in UK waters by foreign ships was being added to the OceanNET site.

Data management and exchange

One of the highlights had been the 600 online requests in 2003 for tide gauge data, a ten-fold increase over previous years. This showed the value of providing easy access to such information. Dr Rickards had been elected as Chair of IODE at its 17th meeting. She

highlighted the challenge of making people more aware of IODE's work and of keeping up with technical and scientific requirements. A significant achievement during the year was the adoption of the IOC Data Exchange Policy at the IOC Assembly. Implementation of this was a high priority.

Coastal data activities

The Coastal Team met five times during the year, the main achievements being to produce an updated online searchable database and the outline of a report of international and national metadata standards. Approx 4000 moored current meter records from 40 organisations in UK waters were now held and during the year the main effort had been in quality controlling those data which had not previously been through the BODC procedures. A DVD was in preparation for release early in 2004. Working closely with GOOSAG and a consultant seven draft chapters of the IACMST contribution to the State of the Seas report had been produced.

5.2 The proposed plan for 2004 was summarised. This included, in addition to the continuation and completion of ongoing tasks, participation in several EU projects and, using funding from Defra and NERC, quality control of national tide gauge network data from the 1980s.

5.3 Chair thanked Dr Rickards for her report and invited discussion. This covered the IOC data policy and implications beyond government, the significant increase in demand for data that was likely to result from environmental assessments for, for example, off-shore wind farms, and what decisions should be made regarding marine XML. Could we afford to wait for international agreement or should we follow what was being used successfully already, for example in the Coastal Observatory?

5.4 *Future Data Strategy Report*

Mike Cowling updated the meeting on progress. The economic study is near completion but it had not been possible for the Expert Group to start its work as planned. As a result the time-scale for completion of the report had had to be modified. A list of candidate 'models' for the Marine Data Gateway was presented, including a new one the Defra SIP. A request was made that details of this be circulated with the minutes. It would be necessary to identify which model(s) best fulfilled the overall requirements of the community and agree the best approach to implementation, ie modification of existing model(s) or develop something new.

Action: Secretariat

5.5 *Consideration of the outcomes from the ICZMap project*

Mike Cowling reported on progress. MEDAG had acted as an intelligent customer and he himself had chaired the project's steering committee. The final report had been produced and the project partners presented their summary and recommendations to the December meeting of MEDAG. The consortium was proposing a bid be made for public sector funding to complete a large proportion of the UK coastline. Given the lack of a detailed business plan MEDAG was not in a position to give its endorsement and was seeking guidance from IACMST to avoid wastage of time on developing a detailed proposal. Members agreed that the results of the Pilot Project and the strong interest in the possible benefits of a more comprehensive study merited the development of a full proposal including a detailed business case.

6 Any Other Business

6.1 Secretary briefly outlined the arrangements for IACMST's presence at the biennial Oceanology International exhibition in March.

The next Plenary Meeting will be held on Thursday 6 May 2004.

31 May 2006