

Inter-Agency Committee on Marine Science and Technology

Minutes

Thirty-eighth Plenary Meeting held on Thursday 16 September 2004 from 10.30 in Defra, Room 808, Nobel House, Smith Square, London.

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| <p>Present: Prof Howard Dalton, Defra (Chair) Mr Tim Bostock, DfID Dr Richard Briggs, DARDNI Dr Robin Cook, Scottish Executive FRS Dr Martin Fiddler, FCO Dr John Lock, Defra Dr John Mitchell, Met Office Dr Phil Newton, NERC Mr David Palmer, Environment Agency</p> <p>Independent Members: Prof Mike Cowling Prof Peter Liss Mr Ian Townend</p> | <p>Secretariat: Mr Trevor Guymer</p> <p>Visitors: Mrs Claire Burt, Dstl (for item 3)</p> <p>Apologies: Dr Bruce Callander, MoD Ms Theresa Crossley, DfT</p> |
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Welcome

Chairman welcomed Tim Bostock as the DfID representative and Claire Burt who was to make a presentation under Item 3.

Minutes of the Thirty-seventh Meeting (6th May 2004)

Approved subject to two amendments.

Actions

All the previous actions were reviewed and had been addressed.

1. Matters arising

None, apart from those covered in the main agenda.

2. Fisheries-related research

2.1 This item followed from a presentation in May on the PMSU's report on the future of the UK fishing industry. A meeting had been held at Aberdeen in May to explore ways in which Defra, NERC, SEERAD and DARDNI might work together better

in this area. One of the outcomes had been an open meeting in Edinburgh on 2nd September attended by 120 representing a wide range of interests, including academia and the fishing industry. A strawman document provided to participants had also been circulated to members of IACMST. Three IACMST members (Phil Newton, John Lock and Robin Cook) had been involved in the organisation of the meeting.

2.2 Phil Newton reported that there had been broad support for the strawman at the Edinburgh meeting from all sectors and it was agreed there was a need to set up a programme, underpinned by the ecosystem approach, to address the issues identified. Subgroups were to be formed to draft objectives for each theme so that an overall plan could be provided to stakeholders and funders. The concept of a virtual centre of excellence (similar to the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change) had been suggested as an appropriate organisational structure to harness effort from the relevant sectors without the heavy overhead of setting up a new physical entity.. This could, for example, establish a directed funding mode into which bids could be made. Secondments could be made to achieve the necessary core expertise. NERC was developing some ideas in consultation with other parties to bring to its Science Board in November. It had been noted by the meeting that IACMST was supportive and it was also possible that the Environmental Research Funders' Forum (ERFF) and the socio-economic community might be engaged. There was also a need to think beyond the UK for which DfID's experience in fisheries development would be very useful.

2.3 Mike Cowling, who had also attended the meeting, was disappointed that the scientific priorities did not emerge more clearly, a view also expressed by one or two other members. Although establishing appropriate funding mechanisms was important, the Committee considered that these priorities needed to be established before engaging with the potential funding bodies. Concern was also expressed over the Centre of Excellence concept; although this type of arrangement was in vogue it was not clear that it was necessarily what was needed in the present context. Lastly, although the Edinburgh meeting had been told that IACMST were supportive of the initiative it was not obvious what role it could play in the structure being proposed. The proposed subgroups were asked to keep the issue in mind. Chairman requested that IACMST be kept informed of developments arising from the Edinburgh meeting..

Action Phil Newton.

3. Underwater sound and marine mammals

3.1 Over the past few months this topic had been gaining an increasing profile with reference in both the media and Parliament. It had been the subject of a side meeting organised by non-governmental organisations at the recent UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on the Oceans and the Law of the Sea. Two IACMST member organisations, MoD and NERC, had also discussed the issue at one of their regular bi-lateral meetings. They had concluded that because of the scope of the science involved and the breadth of any potential implications it would be very useful to broaden the debate across other relevant government departments and agencies. IACMST Plenary

was seen as the appropriate starting point – hence the appearance of the topic on the agenda.

3.2 A presentation was made by Claire Burt of Dstl Naval Systems Department, MoD entitled “Coordinating research on managing risk to marine mammals from acoustic sensors”. There has been increasing interest in marine mammal strandings associated with acoustic transmissions from a variety of sources. Risk management processes were in place within MoD. A balance had to be struck between the need to maintain operational capability whilst protecting the natural environment. Research topics currently carried out within MoD to improve understanding of behaviour and detection of marine mammals were outlined. Measures were taken to mitigate marine mammal disturbance including Environmental Impact Assessments, procedures for detecting and classifying marine mammals and improving understanding of the behaviour of marine mammals. Detection was based primarily on passive acoustic techniques and visual monitoring, together with radar and electro-optical sensing. Behavioural studies included work with the Sea Mammal Research Unit on the distribution of small cetaceans in shallow water and their response to acoustic energy, and also in the correlation of marine mammals with ocean features in the NW Approaches. The presentation concluded with a recommendation that government research in this area be coordinated and the suggestion that a working group be convened to review research and report back to IACMST.

3.3 After thanking Claire Burt, the Chairman asked her whether the problem was accepted by MoD. She replied that it was accepted there was an issue but not that any particular cause was proven. There was some discussion on the nature of the strandings observed and the reliability of the information on which this was based. David Palmer suggested that consideration should be given to broadening the scope of any study beyond military sonars and marine mammals and placing it in a wider context such as the Water Framework Directive. The possible impacts of pile driving in ports and off-shore wind farms were also mentioned. It was agreed that a wide-ranging working group, with an independent chairman, should be set up which would include representation from the NGOs and industry. Reference was also made to a workshop on marine mammals and acoustic geo-surveying techniques in London at the end of September which was being convened by the National Science Foundation and the European Science Foundation’s Marine Board. Claire Burt and Secretary IACMST were to attend.

Action Secretary.

4. Items from Action Group Chairs

GOOSAG (Ian Townend).

4.1 The Efttec economics report was about to go to the printers for publication in November. It had assisted in making the case for UK funding of Jason-2 but its chief purpose was to provide a general framework for developing the economic case for sustained measurements. The Marine Processes and Climate input to the State of the Seas Report was available on the password-protected area of the Oceannet website. Members should contact himself or the IACMST Office for details. The next meeting of GOOSAG

in November would be accompanied by an open meeting on the design of monitoring programmes. Finally, GOOSAG had decided to commission a study to provide an integrated view across all four sectors of the Defra-led Marine Monitoring Strategy. This would be helpful in developing the UK GOOS Strategy particularly in extending beyond MPC.

4.2 John Mitchell added that the UK modelling initiative, proposed by MEDAG but awaiting consideration by the Met office's new CE, had now been endorsed and its core group would include Southampton Oceanography Centre and probably the Environmental Systems Science Centre, both NERC Collaborative Centres.

MEDAG (Mike Cowling)

4.3 The latest version of the report on the future of data and information had been circulated to members. It was very nearly finalised but before formal submission to Defra Mike Cowling wished to make some adjustments to his overarching document to reflect points made in the meetings set up to implement the Marine Data and Information Partnership. Discussion (MDIP) focused on the need to ensure sufficient resources were obtained to sustain the data partnership. At its July meeting, MEDAG was appraised of developments with MDIP and considered the relationship between itself and MDIP. Other topics covered at the MEDAG meeting included a pilot project involving BODC for better management of data arising from the Crown Estate's Round 2 wind farm licensing. Opportunities were being taken to disseminate news of MDIP, e.g. at Aberdeen Littoral 2004.

4.4 Mike Cowling and Secretary had had discussions with IMarEST about possible joint meetings (MC is a Vice President of IMarEST). As an experiment a first meeting entitled 'Getting more out of marine data' was to be held on 3 February. Arrangements for publicity and registration were being coordinated through the IACMST Office.

5. Spending Review: Possible Outline Bid

5.1 In introducing this item the Chairman noted that Treasury had viewed the joined-up approach of NERC, Defra and EA in the last Spending review round positively. At May Plenary, Secretary had been requested to produce a costed set of proposals for consideration in September. He spoke to a circulated paper which reiterated the inadequacy of present funding arrangements and included a first attempt at a list of possible components of such a bid, divided into coastal and open ocean contributions and with very approximate costings. The intention was to give an idea of the size and scope of the bid so that members could comment and, approve its further development. Chair stressed the need to be radical and innovative.

5.2 Members discussed the relationship between the proposed bid and the usual departmental submissions. It would be important to decide where the dividing line was placed. A useful criterion was that to be part of the bid an activity would have to be cross-cutting. Ian Townend suggested that there was a need for a clear rationale - why was a separate programme needed, how it related to the National Meteorological Programme, to climate and operational oceanography, and identifying particular gaps.

The importance of having a focus around the coastal zone was stressed along with the inclusion of living marine resources and socio-economic impacts.

5.3 It was also suggested that in addition to endorsing the approach the bid would need to show how it linked to international GEO plans and other related activities. Chairman concluded by saying that the lead department for the bid should be identified, and that the issues to be incorporated should be refined. He invited members to respond with ideas by the end of October.

Action All.

Action Secretary

6. ‘Gregynog-2’ – Ideas For Possible IACMST Retreat

6.1 At the May meeting, Secretary had been asked, in consultation with Mike Cowling, to prepare a paper on the possible aims and structure of a Gregynog-2. The paper put forward several possible objectives which could be treated separately or in combination: (i) as for the previous retreat, to focus on horizon scanning attempting to identify the issues likely to become most important in Marine Science and Technology (MST) over the next 5-10 years; (ii) to discuss the future role of IACMST, (iii) to further develop the Spending Review bid. Participants should be chosen to give a broad representation of the UK MST sector, perhaps involving a larger number than the previous retreat (23). As for G-1, the services of a facilitator, combined with highly interactive sessions should be considered. An additional idea was to have a keynote speaker who could challenge attendees with big scientific/societal problems. Indeed, the bridge between research and policy might provide a useful focus. Although Gregynog had been an excellent venue alternatives should be explored. A convenient time frame to aim for was Summer 2005, but avoiding the holiday period.

6.2 Members supported the idea. There was a clear preference for holding the meeting in mid-week if possible, a suitable period being end June/beginning of July. Dartington Hall in Devon was suggested as a venue, combining a suitable location with good facilities. Two names were recommended as possible keynote speakers; both would be approached. It was suggested that the focus of the Retreat should be on a bigger overview than was usually possible but it was agreed that the outcome of the meeting needed to be something that could be implemented.

Action All.

Action Secretary

7. Vision for IACMST: A view from the Chair

7.1 Having chaired IACMST for over a year, Chairman's impression was that the Committee had been searching for a new identity, not knowing what it should concentrate on in the next period of its existence. In his view IACMST should have a higher public

profile, being seen to do and achieve things. He posed a number of questions to stimulate discussion, including: do we have the right structure and membership and the appropriate interactions with other bodies such as the Research Councils and ERFF? Should IACMST be playing a greater role in informing and directing science and policy? How should we be responding to the new challenges and opportunities provided by GEO and GMES? Should we be choosing to focus on fewer issues and doing them really well? If significant resources were obtained for MST by IACMST, for example through the Spending Review bid, then the perception of IACMST would undergo significant change.

7.2 A lively discussion then ensued, covering many of the above topics. Whilst IACMST had concentrated recently on environmental issues, the shipping and oil/gas sectors should not be overlooked. Given recent agenda items perhaps the fishing industry should be invited to join as Members but this consideration also applied to other industries and went beyond the present principle of restricting membership to government departments and agencies. Industry and NGOs are, however, represented on the IACMST Action Groups. Hitherto, the emphasis had been on coordinating UK MST as stated in its Terms of Reference. This had worked quite well though instances still occurred where departments pursued initiatives of wider interest without necessarily referring them to IACMST. There might be a case for modifying the ToRs. One suggestion was that IACMST should have sufficient resources to commission work but not to be seen as a funding body. It was also pointed out that if the IACMST remit changed to a more pro-active role, involving significant sums of money then the attitude of individual departments might change, especially if they perceived any threat to their traditional areas of activity or responsibility. However, it seemed inevitable that, as IACMST evolves, it will raise contentious issues. The important thing was to keep departments enfranchised and, as part of this, it would be useful to put ideas for the vision on paper. Chairman concluded the discussion by suggesting that additional resourcing for IACMST itself might be included in the Spending Review bid, in addition to the observing system elements.

Action Chairman

8. AOB

8.1 Updates on ERANets of relevance to IACMST were given. MariFISH had produced a proposal involving 16 partners which would be submitted at the end of September. Defra were providing a coordination role, Although the original proposal for a pollution-related ERANet had been unsuccessful, re-submission was being considered. MarinERA, which brought together marine science programme managers, and on which IACMST had observer status, was holding a kick-off meeting in the next couple of months.

**IACMST 38th Plenary Meeting
Thursday 16th September 2004**

Action List

| Action No | Action | Agenda | Action Required by |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | Report developments arising from Edinburgh meeting. | 2 | Phil Newton |
| 2 | Set up a working group on underwater noise and marine life, with appropriate membership and terms of reference, to report back to Plenary in approximately 1 year | 3 | Secretary |
| 3 | Respond to draft Spending Review bid by end of October. | 5 | Members |
| 4 | Identify lead department and further develop bid taking account of members' comments | 5 | Secretary |
| 5 | Send further ideas on Retreat to Secretary. | 6 | Members |
| 6 | Investigate venues/dates in consultation with Chairman's office | 6 | Secretary |
| 7 | Produce paper on the way ahead for IACMST | 7 | Chairman |