

Inter-Agency Committee on Marine Science and Technology

Minutes

**Forty-second Plenary Meeting held on Monday 30th January 2006 from 13:00
Defra, Nobel House London.**

<p>Present: Prof Howard Dalton, Defra (Chair) Dr John Lock, Defra Mr David Palmer, Environment Agency Dr Michael Depledge, Environment Agency Dr Phil Newton, NERC Dr Walter Crozier, DARDNI Dr Robin Cook, FRS Mr David Foskett, DTI Dr Mike Bell, Met Office Dr John Portmann, GOOSAG Coordinator Dr Lesley Rickards, MED Coordinator Dr Liz Bentley, MOD (FAO) Lt Cdr. Mark Reed, MOD (DIJE)</p>	<p>Independent Members: Prof Peter Liss Mr Ian Townend</p> <p>Secretariat: Mr Trevor Guymer</p> <p>Apologies: Mr Neil MacPherson, DfID Dr Phil Burnell, EPSRC Ms Theresa Crossley, DfT Dr Andrew Tate, FCO Dr Nigel Heriz-Smith, OST</p>
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42nd Meeting on 30th January 2006

The minutes were approved subject to minor amendments to paragraphs 2.2 and 5.1. Chairman noted that this would be Phil Newton's last meeting as the NERC representative and thanked him for his contribution.

1. Review of Actions

1.1 Chairman reported that the issues of funding for sustained observations had been raised at a recent meeting of Chief Scientific Advisers and an action to pursue further had been taken by Sir David King. All other actions had been completed or would be dealt with under other agenda items.

Matters arising

Marine bioresources.

1.2 Phil Newton reported that, following discussions between parties, it had been decided a presentation was not appropriate at this stage. However, developments had occurred. It had been decided that marine bioresources should be included within the coordinated bid Oceans 2025 being prepared by the NERC marine centres. NERC Council had also asked for an integrated proposal to be put forward involving Defra and SEERAD. A meeting to discuss how to progress both these aspects was scheduled within the next few days. John Lock reminded the meeting that these developments were in line

with the Net Benefits report produced by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit which emphasised the importance of the programme. Chairman requested that a brief presentation be made at the May Plenary, by which time the Oceans 2025 bid would have been submitted.

Action 1: Secretary to arrange presentation on marine bioresources at May Plenary

Follow-up to Retreat

1.3 Secretary reported that to date only three member agencies had identified their priorities by completing the horizon scanning table. More responses were needed before we can determine how to take these forward via working groups or some other means. Secretary would write to member departments with reminders.

Action 2: Secretary write to departments reminding them to indicate priorities for horizon scanning.

1.4 Replacement for Mike Cowling as independent member of IACMST. Several names had been suggested to the Secretary and views on each were sought. A number of factors, including areas of expertise and geographical representation, were considered and there was a clear view that Graham Shimmiel, Director of SAMS should be approached to see if he was willing to serve IACMST in this capacity.

2. UNDERWATER SOUND AND MARINE LIFE

2.1 Peter Liss, who had chaired the WG, provided an update, together with inputs from the Secretary. At the last meeting the Committee had agreed to publish the report and endorsed three of the recommendations. Several departments had requested more time to consider the remaining six recommendations. The report was now ready to go to print and final draft proofs were available for inspection. Given the caveats which now appeared in the preface, members were content to endorse the report as a whole. One or two minor errors were noted and it was suggested that grouping the recommendations together at the beginning of the report would be helpful. Secretary would ensure these changes were made before the report was released. A press release was also being prepared.

It was important that the report's conclusions should be taken forward. A small group was needed, involving some of the WG members.

Action 3: Secretary to identify a small team to carry forward the WG's recommendations.

2.2 Discussions had taken place with IMarEST and a joint meeting with IMarEST on the topic was being planned; this would effectively act as the first meeting of the forum proposed in recommendation 9. IACMST would need to contribute to a small planning group.

It was suggested that Recommendation 7 be directed towards the Marine Board of ESF.

Action 4: Secretary to send report to ESF MB and discuss how to take recommendations forward.

2.3 Lastly, it was agreed that a letter should be sent by Howard Dalton and/or Peter Liss to IACMST member departments seeking their response to the report and asking whether they wished to nominate anyone to the Forum.

Action 5: Secretary to draft letter and arrange for mailing and collation of replies.

3. MEDAG REVIEW

3.1 This review had been commissioned by Plenary in Summer 2005, recognising that over 5 years had elapsed since the previous review and that recent developments, e.g. the formation of MDIP, made a reassessment of MEDAG's activities very timely. The review group had completed its work in January and the draft final report had been circulated to members on CD-ROM. David Palmer, the Group's Chairman, presented an overview. A number of activities had proceeded well during the review period but he focused attention on issues requiring attention. Recommendations had been organised under 3 headings: consolidation of recommendations from 1999 review, future work and governance.

3.2 MEDAG suffered from not having a sufficiently strategic view and this had been exacerbated by the lack of a mid-term assessment as suggested by the previous review panel in 1999. He also noted that the MED Coordinators had not received as much input and guidance from members as might have been expected and this in turn affected the overall balance of MEDAG activity and its perception by outsiders.

3.3 Having considered MEDAG reports and submissions from sponsors and experts in data issues outside the Action Group membership, the Review Panel was convinced that a strong requirement for MED activities still remained, and that this required not only a continuation of the MED Coordinator role but of the Action Group itself. The Panel also recognised that the role of MDIP was somewhat different, being focused on meeting specific policy needs linked with the Government's Marine Stewardship agenda. It was widely seen as a Defra-led initiative. MEDAG had a much wider role, including linkage to European and international data exchange programmes as well as routine, long-term activities such as compiling inventories. In retrospect it would have been better for MDIP to have been conducted within the MEDAG framework. However, it was accepted that for a variety of reasons the two should remain separate. The Review had, however, proposed a revision to diagrams clarifying the structure and governance within IACMST. Modifications to the MEDAG Terms of Reference (ToRs) were also proposed.

3.4 Chairman thanked David Palmer and his Panel for their review and invited discussion. It was clear that the conclusions of the review were broadly accepted but that further clarification might be possible by additional changes to the ToRs of the two

groups strengthening cross-references where appropriate. This would assist sponsors who needed to see that clearly defined programmes were in place. Peter Liss, who currently chairs both MEDAG and MDIP, pointed out that in recent months steps had been taken to promote closer integration between the two groups: the MDIP Project Manager had a desk next to the MEDAG Coordinator, meetings of the MDIP Project Board and MEDAG were being held back to back with strongly overlapping membership, and joint forums involving the wider community were being planned. This was already making a positive impact.

Action 6. MEDAG to consider further revisions to ToRs, in addition to those proposed by the Review.

3.5 Chairman noted that the revised structure diagram still contained a joint sponsors board and questioned whether this was still required. The same functionality could still be achieved through the Project Board/Action Group meetings and/or IACMST plenary. Setting up a separate committee with the need for another chairman was a complication which might be best avoided. After some discussion, Members decided to revisit this issue after Agenda Item 6.

4. PROGRESS WITH MDIP

4.1 Peter Liss reported on progress since the September Plenary. A major step forward had been the appointment in of a Project Manager (Dr David Cotton) who took up duties in early November on a 70% basis. He had made a good start, visiting most of the partners and engaging with the chairs of the three working groups (Data Archiving Centres; Interoperability Standards; Mapping and Applications) which had been taking forward some issues during the preceding months. A fourth group (Communications) had yet to meet. A meeting of the Project Board had taken place on 14th December, together with a meeting of MEDAG. A project plan was being drafted which would be considered at the next Project Board meeting on 1st March. The Project Manager had been asked to make a presentation to May Plenary on this plan and the progress achieved to date. Members would therefore have the opportunity to comment on developments.

In concluding, Peter Liss asked whether the common chairmanship of MDIP and MEDAG should continue as at present.

5. ANNUAL REPORT OF MEDAG AND FUTURE PLANS

5.1 Lesley Rickards, the MED Coordinator, gave an overview presentation. 2005 had been a year of transition, partly because of the launch of MDIP, with which MEDAG was developing a growing relationship. She highlighted the contributions made to IACMST's input to Charting Progress, the follow-up to concerns over how the EU INSPIRE initiative would apply to marine issues, and the fact that approximately 100 requests for marine data and information, from a variety of organizations, had been handled. Top priorities for 2006 had been identified with MEDAG sponsors in December and, following the suggestion of the MEDAG Review, a 5-year Forward Look was to be

prepared which would provide a broader context for the annual programme of work. The anticipated deliverables included web-searchable inventories of UK wave and tide gauge measurements, publication of the report from the marine photographs and videos workshop, delivery of temperature and salinity data from approximately 45 cruises to global archives, and production of the moored current meter data DVD.

The Chairman thanked Lesley for her report and invited comments. One related to how data from DARD cruises were handled.

Action 7: Lesley Rickards to check whether the cruise inventory included all cruises conducted by DARD.

5.2 In response to a request it was agreed that in future a breakdown would be provided of work programme components by cost. It was also suggested that feedback should be obtained from sponsoring organisations on how much they were using the data.

Action 8: Lesley Rickards to provide breakdown of costs and information on use of the data by sponsoring organizations.

The 2005 and plans for 2006 were accepted.

6. ANNUAL REPORT OF GOOSAG AND FUTURE PLANS

6.1 Ian Townend, the GOOSAG Chairman, began by expressing his thanks for work done by John Portmann, GOOSAG Coordinator, and the IACMST Secretary. Highlights of the year included: (1) completion of the GOOS Strategic Plan, a very comprehensive document from which a digest appropriate to the policy context would be published; (2) the completion of nearly all of the tasks in the Marine Processes and Climate Action Plan for which GOOSAG had responsibility - remaining tasks had been ceded to MARG, which would be developing a new integrated programme; (3) the imminent completion of a contract on indicators, following incorporation of comments made at the GOOSAG open meeting on indicators in November; (4) completion of a report reviewing marine monitoring across the four sectors which had made up MMCG, which was regarded by Defra as a key input to MARG; and (5) the feedback that had been provided to Defra on plans for a UK Marine Monitoring Strategy following publication of Charting Progress. An ongoing topic of concern was the uncertainty that surrounds future funding of the Argo and Jason programmes.

6.2 The document circulated before the meeting included plans for 2006 which had been approved at the November meeting of GOOSAG and required ratification by Plenary. Items included: acceleration of the work on measurement protocols, setting up a programme of work through NCOF to explore the use of models in optimising the design of a marine monitoring network to meet UK requirements, and helping to define the basis of a long-term monitoring component in the next spending review. There was one additional item. Since the planned programme of studies and reports had more or less been completed, the task now was to work through issues arising from these activities

and to produce a list of priority actions, in the light of the Terms of Reference agreed for both MAPC and MARG and the recommendations of the UK GOOS Strategy report. The outcome of this exercise would be agreed at the next GOOSAG meeting and brought to the May Plenary.

Action 9: Ian Townend to present list of priority actions to May Plenary

6.3 The main point from the subsequent discussion of the report was the ongoing issue of long-term monitoring. Although the UKMMS might help, it was still unclear what its scope would be. Phil Newton reminded the meeting that the Environmental Research Funders' Forum had a group looking at environmental monitoring with potential implications for a strategic decision-making mechanism. Mike Depledge pointed out that the EEA had now picked up on indicators.

Action 10: Secretary to make contact with ERF group

The report for 2005 and plans for 2006 were accepted.

CONTINUATION OF AGENDA ITEM 3

3.6 At this point, Howard Dalton had to leave for another commitment and handed the chair to the Secretary. The one remaining item concerned the need for a separate MEDAG/MDIP sponsors' board carried forward from Item 3. There was a strong consensus that a separate box on the structure diagram was an unnecessary complication. The same functionality could be achieved by other means and, if circumstances demanded it, a meeting of the Board could be convened at any time – as had happened when funding commitments for the initial 2-year period of MDIP were being sought. This decision would be reported back to the next MEDAG/MDIP meeting on 1st March.

There were no items under Any Other Business and the meeting closed at 1640.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 18th May 2006.

IACMST 42nd Plenary Meeting
Monday, 30th January 2006

Action List

Action No.	Action	Agenda	Action Required by
1	Arrange presentation on marine bioresources at May Plenary	1	Secretary
2	Write to departments reminding them to indicate priorities for horizon scanning.	1	Secretary
3	To identify a small team to carry forward the WG's recommendations.	2	Secretary
4	To send report to ESF MB and discuss how to take recommendations forward.	2	Secretary
5	To draft letter and arrange for mailing and collation of replies.	2	Secretary
6	To consider further revisions to ToRs, in addition to those proposed by the Review.	3	MEDAG
7	To check whether the cruise inventory included all cruises conducted by DARD.	5	Lesley Rickards
8	To provide breakdown of costs and information on use of the data by sponsoring organizations.	5	Lesley Rickards
9	To present list of priority actions to May Plenary	6	Ian Townend
10	To make contact with ERF group	6	Secretary