**MarPAMM Carlingford Lough SPA Steering Group Meeting #2**

**Date:** Friday 26th February 2021 **Time**: 10.00 **Location**- Online Zoom Meeting

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**Attendance**

Amy McCormack – Love your Lough (AMcC)

Bernarde Kilgallon – Residents Group Carlingford Lough Area (BK)

Brian McDonald – Mussel fisherman (BMcD)

Brendan McSherry – Louth County Council (BMcS)

Catriona Tosco – Commissioner of Irish Lights (CT)

Denis McDonald – Mussel fisherman (DMcD)

Darren Rice – AONB & Geopark – Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (DR)

David Holmes - Warrenpoint Harbour Authority (DH)

Irene Hamilton - Carlingford Lough Ferry (IH)

John Doran – Cahir Linn Oysters (JD)

Judith Caldwell, AONB & Geopark – Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (JC)

Kenneth Bodles – RSPB (KB)

Martin Flanagan - BIM (MF)

Michael Young – Harbour Master (MY)

Olivia McCartan – Love your Lough (OMcC)

Thomas Rodgers - Warrenpoint Port (TR)

**In attendance**

Catriona MacArthur, TCI Engagement (CMacA)

David Stevenson, Project Officer (DS)

Justin Judge, Project Officer (JJ)

Kendrew Colhoun, AFBI (KC)

Stephen Hill, TCI Engagement (SH)

**Apologies**

None

**1: Welcome and Introductions**

**JJ** welcomed the Steering Group and laid out the online house rules for the event.

**DS** provided a brief overview of the minutes from the last Steering Group meeting for confirmation and gave the floor for any questions/issues arising from the previous minutes. There was one amendment to the minutes, which was to include John Doran’s company name – Cahir Linn Oysters – which had been inadvertently omitted. No other questions/issues were raised.

**DS** raised the point of election of Chairperson for the group. The best way for this is send out a google poll where everyone chooses their option for chair, and we elect from there. The minutes from each meeting will then be sent to the chair for sign off before being sent out to the rest of the group members.

**2: Presentation 1 – Updates from previous meeting**

**JJ** gave a presentation outlining:

* What work AFBI have been doing since last meeting;
* Outreach and discussion work;
* Initial MPA Management Plan Objectives for Steering Group;
* The benefits you, as Stakeholders, expect to be realised from the management plan;
* The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats expected from the plan, that came out of the last meeting, and;
* The next steps we will be taking in developing the management plans.

**3. Presentation: Update on the Irish Regions Seabird work**

**KC** gave a presentation outlining some of the MarPAMM seabirds work package and related work going on in Carlingford Lough. The presentation outlined:

* The MarPAMM Seabird Works Package aims;
* The data being collected to inform management plans i.e.:
	+ Monitoring/tracking
	+ Modelling seabirds-fisheries interactions
	+ Climate change modelling
	+ Population Viability Analysis
* Seabird monitoring in Ireland;
* Work ongoing for seabird-fisheries interactions i.e.:
	+ These interactions documented across a range of species
	+ Bycatch is substantial global issue
	+ Aim to know how interactions vary by species and gear types
	+ Use of tracking data and vessel monitoring systems to investigate interactions
* Work ongoing for climate change modelling and effects on species distributions
	+ Literature review
	+ Modelling
	+ Informing adaption
* Population Viability Analysis i.e.:
	+ Where seabird colonies are within the MPAs, what their population trends have been through time and what would they be with and without management measures

**3: Discussion sessions**

**Activity 1: Discussion section – What are Stakeholders’ perceptions of how the MarPAMM Seabird Works Package contributes to the MPA Management Plan Development**

The purpose of this discussion was to understand how Steering Group (SG) members expected the Seabirds Work Package to integrate into the Carlingford Lough MPA Management Plan, by considering how this work could be utilised for management plan policy generation. It also gave a chance for Stakeholders to review how this work could shape their activity/work/interest within the Carlingford Lough area.

**Carlingford Lough SPA Digital Breakout Rooms - Activity 1**

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| **Breakout Room 1** | **Breakout Room 2** |
| **Lead- Kendrew Colhoun (KC)** | **Lead- David Stevenson (DS)** |
| David Holmes (DH) | Kenny Bodles (KB) |
| Martin Flanigan (MF) | Amy McCormack (AMcC) |
| Brendan McSherry (BMcS) | Bernarde Kilgallon (BK) |
| Tom Rodgers (TR) | John Doran (JD) |
| Catriona MacArthur (CMacA) | Darren Rice (DR) |
| **Breakout Room 3** |
| **Lead – Justin Judge (JJ)** |
| Irene Hamilton (IH) |
| Olivia McCartan (OM) |
| Catriona Tosco (CT) |
| Judith Caldwell (JC) |

**Breakout Room 1: Lead (KC)**

* **DH** (question).What do seabirds contribute to the ecosystem? We all know why bees, for example, are important but not why seabirds are. This is important in order to make clear why we are including seabirds in the management plan.
	+ **KC** (reply): It is true that the contribution of seabirds would not be widely known and that they may be seen, for example, as competitors for the fish we eat. However, they are part of our biodiversity and have a role to play therefore in our ecosystem. For that reason, we need to look after them; otherwise we will suffer the consequences.
	+ **BMcS** (reply): Look at Mars. There is no life there while earth is full of life. If we keep polluting the oceans, we will end up like Mars.
	+ DH (reply): The analogy of Mars is very extreme! The issue is that we need to create a favourable narrative to promote seabirds. Why seabirds matter and why we should all care. The issue of seabirds is not one that has ever been raised at Warrenpoint (except in connection with pigeons).
	+ **KC** (reply): They are part of our natural capital. Every component of our natural capital has a part to play, even though it may be hard to detect. I agree that people need to understand why seabirds are very important.
* **MF** (question): Asked whether he might get a copy of the report about Brent Geese that KC referred to.
	+ **KC** (reply): Said he didn’t have a copy of the report but noted that 90% of the world’s population of Brent Geese are to be found in Ireland at some point every year. These geese are losing space as a result of mud flaps but they can be seen feeding on the flaps.
	+ **MF** (reply): Said he had seen them and that they did not seem disturbed by the oyster farming. He noted that seabirds provide an important environmental service in reducing excess nitrates.
	+ **KC** (reply): Our activities need to be sustainable. In some places, aquaculture is going too far – for example where trellises account for 80% of the area but that is not happening – yet – in Carlingford Lough. The difference is that Carlingford is licensed, but Foyle, for example, is not.
* **MF** (question): Are sea birds harmed by their interactions with fishing boats?
	+ **KC** (reply): Yes.

**Breakout Room 2: Lead (DS)**

* **DS** (question): What are your perceptions of how the MarPAMM Seabird Works Package contributes to the MPA Management Plan Development?
	+ **KB** (reply): RSPB have a key interest in this area and there was a lot of information shared this morning. From our perspective the application of management plans will help to address disturbances with sea-birds. It will help to look at the interactions of species within the inshore or nearshore areas. The context of the shoreline needs to be taken into consideration when examining the effects of sea-bird interactions. A threat is the limited monitoring of activities in these areas; a good example is limited/non-existent vessel monitoring of vessels under 10m within Carlingford. VMS on smaller vessels could be a good, viable and easy solution to this.
	+ **AMcC** (reply): Recently with regards to public engagement within designated areas there is a strong public reluctance to engage. There is concern with Terns, Curlews and Black Guillemots within the RAMSAR (SPA) boundary. The problem is these areas are designated, what does this mean? Why are they designated? There is limited explanation for a wider public/activity perspective. There is a need to make clearer the understanding of what these designations aim to achieve. Education is very important to obtain enhanced community buy-in and local ownership. There is definite concern about the land around the Lough and education could help to promote more sustainable activities.
	+ **BK** (reply): I notice a lot more oyster catchers. I would like to see more published representations of sea-bird changes within Carlingford Lough. There needs to be attention given to other species, not just a focus on species like Brent Geese. An important factor for the management of the Lough is greater public involvement, there could be notice boards and information on bird sightings placed around the Lough. This could include a mechanism for reporting issues or particular species sightings. The Carlingford Lough area currently is under represented for this type of environmental work.
	+ **DR** (reply): A lot of times designations are created with action plans. But often funding and support are department bounded. This enables little public involvement and agreement on the perceived future management of a designation. Such engagement is important for public inclusion and agreement on the management approach and regulations. There is a clear viewpoint that the cross-border Carlingford Lough area has been historically underrepresented for this funding and support. Another issue is with wildlife disturbances, examples include walking/running dogs in unsuitable/unpermitted areas with limited/lack of enforcement. Media resources/ videos could be helpful to create interactive and accessible sites for dog-walkers that outline areas suitable for walking; it would also highlight why areas are not suitable due to breeding sea-birds. This interaction could enhance overall breeding success.
	+ **JD** (reply): Concur with DR within the Carlingford Lough Area. There is an illusion of protection rather than anything stringent. There needs to be a catalogue of intertidal birds and their threats. There is a prevailing local viewpoint that surveys of the past number of years have been showing ok numbers of sea-birds, but this perception is killing local buy-in for taking responsibility for long-term sea-bird sustainability. A lot of new approaches or regulations are met with local apathy.
	+ **KB** (reply): Long-term sea-bird management in Carlingford Lough could consider drivers for change, which focus on the loss of habitat and disturbance. Focus on drivers for change can help to show we can actively change activities. This could rely on small discrete areas that apply a multi-disciplinary approach to look at the liveability at sea. Looking at trawling data provides insight into what’s happening within the habitat. This trawling needs to be looked at from all activity areas, including while at sea.

**Breakout Room 3: Lead (JJ)**

* **JJ** (question): What are your individual experiences with sea-birds and how would their enhanced protection apply to you?
	+ **IH** (reply): As ferry operators, we want to keep/enhance passenger enjoyment of seabirds along our routes. As Lough users, we want to help preserve and protect seabirds and we feel we can contribute to this by the installation of information boards on-board our vessels.
	+ **OM** (reply): That’s a great point IH makes, as we at Love Your Lough want more information provided especially on development areas such as the upcoming Warrenpoint (proposed) development. Information boards at these areas would also add to the tourism sector too.
	+ **IH** (reply): I’d like to add that we also have nesting boxes installed at our terminal which we would like to see considered in the protection.
	+ **OM** (reply): Grouping these points together, it could be good to integrate sea bird monitoring with the newly established Irish Whale and Dolphin Group surveys that were granted access on the ferries. This could help collect additional data.
* **JJ** (question): How do you feel the project is progressing and what are your thoughts on initial outputs from the last meeting?
	+ **IH** (reply): With being busy I unfortunately have not kept up to date.
	+ **CT** (reply): I haven’t seen much about it, but it would help to circulate some updates between meetings.
	+ **JJ** (reply): We have provided some updates on our Facebook and Twitter pages and there are occasional updates on the MarPAMM website. We also have a quarterly eZine that provides information across the project. Hopefully these media resources have been helpful, but we plan to enhance these so there is more out there for everybody to see.
	+ **JC** (reply): Unfortunately I had some technical issues this morning and missed the updates at the start of the meeting. I have been unaware of updates via social media.

**Activity 2: Brainstorming – What project ideas should be scoped into MarPAMM Carlingford Lough management proposals**

The purpose of this discussion was to understand what benefits and opportunities (from objectives) SG members would like to see shaped into the project scope, from each of their respective backgrounds. Steering group members were given the opportunity to contribute further from the previous meeting as to the benefits they would like to see realised from MPAs. A general consensus was sought so that a benefits map could be produced following the meeting.

**Carlingford Lough SPA Digital Breakout Rooms – Activity 2**

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| **Breakout Room 1** | **Breakout Room 2** |
| **Lead- Kendrew Colhoun (KC)** | **Lead- David Stevenson (DS)** |
| Bernarde Kilgallon (BK) | Thomas Rodgers (TR) |
| Darren Rice (DR) | Irene Hamilton (IH) |
| Amy McCormack (AMcC) | Catriona Tosco (CT) |
| John Doran (JD) | Kenny Bodles (KB) |
| Martin Flanigan (MF) | Unidentified Steering Group member (SG) |
| Catriona MacArthur (CMacA) |  |
| **Breakout Room 3** |
| **Lead – Justin Judge (JJ)** |
| Olivia McCartan (OM)  |
| Brian McDonald (BM) |
| David Holmes (DH) |
| Judith Caldwell (JC) |

**Breakout Room 1: Lead (KC)**

* **MF** (question): A consultation is out at the moment regarding the development of fisheries management measures for Marine Protected Areas and the establishment of scallop enhancement sites in the NI inshore region. How does this tie in with our work here?
	+ **KC**: There are a lot of different designated areas.
* **MF** (comment): What we all want is a Lough that works for everyone, for all interests. I think the reason why Carlingford Lough works is because it has a licensing process.
	+ **JD** (reply): Our oysters have been upgraded from Grade B to Grade A which means we can sell direct to our customers.
	+ **MF** (reply): That shows the high standard of water quality in Carlingford Lough and how we can all work together to maintain these high standards.
	+ **KC** (reply): Carlingford Lough is good compared to other places, but we need to keep it that way. MarPAMM is about reflecting everyone’s interests equally; in other words, not pitting biodiversity interests against commercial interests, for example.
	+ **BK** (reply): It’s about co-existing while protecting the Lough. I am very concerned about the water quality. I saw a water spill and reported it to the Loughs Agency. I would like to know how often water is tested and where the results of the tests can be accessed.
	+ **MF** (reply): JD’s water is tested every month. Swimming only occurs during a set period and so is only tested at that time.
	+ **BK** (reply): People swim all year round and so the water should be tested all year round.
* **AMcC** (comment): Regardless of an individual’s personal interest, everybody needs to understand why we must protect our Lough. We should provide information on the seabirds etc. to improve understanding.
	+ **DR** (reply): There is always room for improvement. What we have at Carlingford Lough is the result of good regulation AND enforcement. So our objectives must be enforceable. Stakeholders need to come together to manage sites and enforce the regulations. For that reason, I welcome the MarPAMM model being applied here.
	+ **JD** (reply): Agree with DR. Re the fragmentation of designated sites, I hope that MarPAMM will simplify things for the public.
	+ **BK** (reply): We need to do more joined up work. There was a consultation done in Louth, for example, which did not see the Lough as a flood risk… but we have had floods!

**Breakout Room 2: Lead (DS)**

* **DS** (question): What project ideas should be scoped into MarPAMM Carlingford Lough management proposals?
* **IH** (reply): Three key objectives for the development of MarPAMM MPA Management Plans in Carlingford Lough are Education, Preservation and Appreciation. We have a commitment to encourage sustainable Lough usage and the plans need to foster this through plan ownership, with information on why and steps to encourage sustainable usage. This is focused community buy-in, with the fishing industry as part of this important ownership.
* **TR** (reply): The objectives of this management plan should focus on the importance of education. The purpose of the management plan, the ongoing issues/concerns and the net overall gain of sustainable solutions. In other words, using sustainability as a wider benefits approach to show what sea-birds do for us.
* **IH** (reply): Awareness and growth of issues/concerns and how sustainability could advance the ecosystem service provisions. Greater education could help, using layman’s terms, to achieve this approach. This could simply look at wider benefits of sustainable management enhancing the conversation of the designations versus the risks of doing nothing. Looking at the wider Lough consequences.
* **Everyone** (side topic comment): Agreement with DH’s previous comments on the pollination example of bees. Another working example of this could be the role of sea-birds within the Lough environment. What does the whole process give back? What is the positive natural capital of sea-birds for Carlingford Lough?
* **CT** (reply): The Management Plan needs to be based on robust species evidence. This needs to understand different species from across the Lough and the policies need to place one species at the forefront which may cause detrimental impacts to others. The supporting data will inform a clear approach. The designated sites need to look at conservations and interactions, to create guidance that helps to minimise disturbance.
* **KB** (reply): We are confident that the needs of the MPAs in Carlingford Lough will be addressed through this Management Plan exercise. Tom raised an interesting point in the value of different species like sea-birds. Using the Ecosystem Services Approaches goes beyond conservation, it explores the overall benefits that management could foster and it can show stakeholders/users what good habitat management looks like.
	+ KB (reply): The feeling is that the public know there are MPA designations, but how do they engage with them? The implications of MPA conservation approaches can be hard to view. Part of the management plan development could provide advice and establish a system for contact/reporting point. This could be good to enhance greater buy-in.
* **CT** (reply): Benefits – Impact of safety of navigation is important.
* **TR** (reply): Raise awareness of interactions and effects of ecosystems- how do activities affect the overall integrity of Lough habitats. What can we do about it?
* **KB** (reply): Information and feedback is important for stakeholder discussions.
* **KB** (reply): Threats- reverse decline in species. If this is not done right the decline could be detrimental. MPAs are good tools for dealing with habitat/species and reversing declines of important features.
* **KB** (reply): Opportunity for the management plan to encourage societal engagement and enhance community, user or activity appreciation of marine environments.
* **IH** (reply): Speaking as part of this group makes sense as we have business responsibility to move towards greater sustainability, which works to protect and enhance designated conservation areas. From our perspective communication is important with visual representations. We look forward to viewing policy drafts and this will be easier for us to comment and provide feedback. Greater advanced notice on policies or targets will help our organisation viewpoint.
* **DS** (reply): The next meeting will provide objectives and actions points for discussion. This will help with targets and the way forward.
* **KB** (reply): This approach is nature born and focuses on stakeholder contributions and perspectives. It is difficult to work with so many stakeholders from different sectors and perspectives. This is valuable and should be viewed as positive for MarPAMM.

**Breakout Room 3: Lead (JJ)**

* **JJ** (question): From your respective backgrounds, what objectives would you like to see scoped into the MPA management plans for Carlingford Lough?
	+ **DH** (reply): I would like to see more specific objectives put forward in terms of understanding where we at so the ports can have input. The first meeting had some great ideas put forward but these were very diverse and generic, so having these become more specific would help us understand where we could have input. One area I think needs addressing is the issue with sewage within the Lough, so I would like to know how that would be tackled and what considerations are being made within the management plan for that. This would tie in with water quality management.
	+ **OM** (reply): I agree with DH, sewage and pollution in general are some of the main points needing addressed. I have tried raising these issues with various agencies over the years but get passed around from one agency to another, so establishing a holistic and collaborative plan for the whole Lough is needed - without any south vs north bureaucracy - would allow for ownership to take place, and this issue (as well as others) may be better addressed.
	+ **BM** (reply): Fishermen have frequent, first-hand experience of water quality issues throughout the Lough and see this regularly, so we know this is a very pressing issue. Unfortunately we feel we aren’t being engaged with very much so we see this as a threat in terms of how much consideration water quality issues will be given, when the greatest number of observations (coming from us) are not being recorded.
		- **JJ** (reply): We are definitely considering inputs from the fishing and aquaculture industry as we know its members are in the best position to report on these factors mentioned. Unfortunately last year due to Covid we were unable to make contact with a lot in this industry given the pressures imposed by the pandemic. However, we are here now and still at a reasonably early stage of the management plan development so your inputs are greatly valued and will be carried forward in the planning process.
* **JJ** (question): What benefits do you expect will come out of the MPA Management Plan in Carlingford Lough?
	+ **OM** (reply): With more protection for more species, this could create some niche tourism which in turn would bring more to the local economies.
	+ **BM** (reply): On the topic of tourism in the Lough: what are the thoughts on the increase of jet skis and their effects on various protected species etc.
		- **OM** (reply): I think we need to think about the effects of tourism as a whole, as well as what benefits could be applied to tourism. But in regard to specific disturbances, it is about knowing who to report this to e.g. if the jet skiers are having an impact on two or more protected species/habitats that are managed by different agencies, how do we know where to send the reports?
	+ **JC** (reply): For benefits to be realised, you can have plans in place but will need wider media and communication that’s consistently bringing the message across of what these benefits are/will be.
		- **JJ** (reply): That’s a great point and we have media outlets that are currently providing updates about what’s going on in the project. We also have plans for wider liaison group meetings to spread awareness of the project and build interest. Additionally, we are working on a range of informative materials to appeal to a broad audience in the form of animations, interactive maps and newsletters. These products will hopefully raise the message of the project and the stakeholders’ objectives and benefits that will help steer the management plan.
	+ **OM** (reply): With the increase of storm intensity and effects of climate change, are there considerations for how these/any benefits will be impacted along the coastline in the future?
		- **JJ** (reply): As part of the MarPAMM project, we have a Coastal Processes work package that is modelling the potential effects of climate change and increased storminess. I do not have the outputs from this work package to hand but there will be considerations made on the effects of coastal processes as well as the features from the other work packages e.g. seabirds, marine mammals, benthic habitats.

**6. Next Steps**

**DS** reiterated that we aim to complete a full draft of the benefits mapping by the end of March and will send this to you at least 10 days before the next steering group meeting, so everybody gets time to review before the meeting. We will be trying to make this as info-graphic as possible to promote discussions.

**DS** advised we are going to take your ideas for the benefits and will include them in the management proposals. We will at the best way forward to mitigate against the weaknesses that have been raised. Then, we are going to bring forward the information from today and discuss how it might have input in to the wider regional steering group.

**DS** advised If any stakeholders have any questions or any information they wish to add please email the project officers at david.stevenson@afbini.gov.uk or justin.judge@afbini.gov.uk.

**DS** gave final thanks to everyone for their participation and closed the meeting.