**MarPAMM Irish Regions Stakeholder Steering Group Meeting 2**

**Date:** 12 February 2021 **Time**: 10.00am **Location**- Online Zoom Meeting

**Present**

Catriona Dowling- Commissioner of Irish Lights

Colin Armstrong- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Dave Wall- Irish Whales and Dolphin Group

Ellen MacMahon- Sustainable Water Network

Gary Burrows- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Garry Gregg- NI Federation of Sea Anglers

Harry Wick- NIFPP- Sea Source

Heidi McIlvenny- Ulster Wildlife

Joe Smithyman- Crown Estate

John Morton- Causeway, Coast and Glens Borough Council Harbour Master

Martin Flanigan – BIM

Martin Graham- NI Tourist Board

Philip Stewart- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Richard Hill- Royal Yachting Association

Tasman Crowe- University College Dublin

Teresa O’Hare- Causeway, Coast and Glens Borough Council

**In attendance**

David Stevenson- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

Justin Judge - Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

Kendrew Colhoun – Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

Quintin Oliver – TCI Engagement

Rich Howells – Marine Scotland Science

Tom Evans – Marine Scotland Science

Victoria Poppleton – Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

**Apologies**

Angela Halpenny - NI Water

**1. Welcome and introductions**

Justin Judge (JJ) welcomed the Irish Regions Stakeholder Steering Group to this second meeting. Introducing himself, JJ explained that he was formerly the MarPAMM Project Officer for BirdWatch Ireland. He is now working for MarPAMM under the umbrella of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.

**2. Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting Welcome and Introductions**

The minutes of the November meeting were approved without change. No questions were raised.

3. **Updates from previous meeting**David Stevenson (DS) gave a presentation outlining the work AFBI has undertaken since the November meeting. This included:

* Completing the feature selection for Northern Ireland and final review of feature inclusion for Ireland.
* Mapping MPAs within two regional mapping areas.
* Reviewing social media initiatives to increase engagement in MarPAMM.
* Reviewing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified at the last meeting.
* Undertaking survey work aboard the Research Vessel Corystes.

DS also advised members of the appointment of Louise Brown as MarPAMM Modelling Officer at AFBI and the return of Kendrew Colhoun to AFBI.

Looking to the work to be undertaken to May 2021, DS highlighted the following tasks:

* Completing the Benefits Map and creating an infographic that will be presented at the next meeting for sign off.
* Working with Marine Science Scotland and Nature Scotland to produce animation videos on MPA management planning.
* Creating a first video experience of what the Irish Regions is doing on the ground on the different work packages.
* Drafting story board ideas and plans for interactive mapping.
* Next Carlingford SPA meeting on 26 February and Murlough SAC meeting on 24 March.
* Wider Liaison Group in April 2021.

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

Rich Hall (RH) gave a presentation outlining some of the MarPAMM seabirds work package and related work under way. 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

**5. Activity 1: Discussion Session – How does the MarPAMM Seabird works package compare to stakeholder perceptions on MPA Management Plan Development.**

 **Breakout Room 1
Lead David Stevenson (DS)**

* Ellen McMahon (EMcM)
* Teresa O’Hare (ToH)
* Richard Howells (RH)
* Martin Flanagan (MF)
* Harry Wicks (HW)
* Catriona Dowling (CD)

**EMcM** - The effects of climate change and building resilience are important components for this plan development. After the management plans have been developed and are operational the effects on habitats and species needs to be monitored, as well as the interactions from human activities. An example of this monitoring could be the application of electronic REM monitoring on vessels under 10m.

**ToH** - From the Rathlin Island perspective the submission of further project funding which aims to ensure invasive marine mammals is important to help enhance and protect nesting sea-bird sites. This ongoing work includes working towards rat eradication. Further work entails a submission to the RSPB led Biosecurity for LIFE project, which aims to ensure that new invasive mammals do not come to Rathlin Island. There is a lot of potential for learning and cross-over between these projects and approaches on Rathlin Island. Another aspect which can be considered on the North Coast/ Rathlin area is isolated communities. We have been looking at work from the Fjords in Iceland and the relationships with seabirds. This approach will help to connect people/communities within MPAs.

**RH**- From the presentation on-going sea-bird work is moving towards the completion of a sustainability strategy. The strategy looks at a literature review which examines sea-bird pressures and actions to mitigate these, as the strategy studies sea-bird nesting sites in aquaculture areas. The output will be a “Sea-bird Conservation Strategy” with the time-frame for public consultation at the end of March 2021.

**CD**- Part of the ongoing work looks at diverse projects establishing new bird-life communities in sites in the east and the west of the areas where we work in Ireland. This includes a project to establish a new Kestrel Population on an island off Donegal.

**HW**- An area of importance to look at is the effect of bycatch on all fishing vessels. From our perspective we have witnesses/members who have working knowledge that helps to show the limited impact on Sea-Gulls. It is important in this plan development that you liaise with career fishing industry members. With regards to sea-birds around vessels, you would be lucky to see it happen once a year while trawling. Young baiting is not overly predominant in this region. Observer data from liaising within this plan development could provide/promote positive benefits, i.e. instead of threat but rather as a bird feeding source.

**RH**- It would take a lot of work to pick this apart, we could spend the whole day on this topic. Although it is not part of the MarPAMM project to look at observer data. The UK Government is looking at this type of research work. From an analysis perspective we are interested in the behaviour of sea-birds in relation to their actions around vessels.

**HW**- It is clear that birds follow vessels. Suggestion- There could be an easy opportunity for AFBI, who already undertake similar work to gather observers. These observers can work to tag fishing gear for this type of survey work, this tagging can lead to a robust sea-bird count and lead into a good data source.

**RH**- There are issues with Fulmar and long-line vessels, so there are a few pieces of observer data and big extraction. Although more data gathering on these issues is required and this need for more data has been flagged with relevant authorities.

**MF**- Are species adaptation and mitigation in the context of climate change take into consideration?

**RH-** Climate change and the effects on habitats are a suggested key idea for the sea-birds work. There is potential to provide novel breeding sites, this could enhance the adaptation capacity through new nesting sites. From the perspective of maintaining fishing stocks and climatic change, then mitigation is difficult.

**MF**- Promotion of predator eradication.

**RH**- This can be overly difficult and expensive, examples like small mammals can very easily hide within an island’s environs.

**ToH**- This is an expensive and difficult process, rats can habit very small areas. It is a challenge to completely eradicate this problem from small areas within habitats. Within Rathlin we have put out an eradication trawler for a 6 month intensive period working on rats and introduced ferrets, with key focus on community engagement to help aid the process. This will follow a bio-security approach.

**MF**- Landing obligations? This process could achieve a 5% improvement and these will get bigger. This is a high-profile topic area for people and for the general public to get behind.

**RH**- Birds forage and birds can get stuck within vessel gear. The interest area is not about discard but about sea-bird interactions with vessels.

**MF**- Could this be extended to policy interactions?

**RH**- Problems are only recently coming to light in North West.

**MF**- Mainly salmon farming and shellfish farms.

**RH**- Shellfish farms show issues, with disturbance for Gannets and Great Northern Divers, but this is a seasonal factor. This is beginning to be looked at and the reasons around aquaculture licensing with detailed observations and update on information guidance.

**Breakout Room 2
 Lead Justin Judge (JJ)**

* Dowling Garry Greg (GG)
* Phil Stewart (PS)
* Tom Evans (TE)
* Colin Armstrong (CA)
* Richard Hill (RH)
* GG (question): A general first question on distinguishing the types of equipment being used when the bycatch interactions occur with fishing vessels: are we considering just demersal or pelagic?
	+ TE (reply): it depends on the species and its range so that will determine what species interact with what type of fishing gear but is likely a mix.
	+ PS (reply): The information gathered from these interactions can help identify ‘species at risk’ and therefore inform future measures protecting them from types of gear posing most risk.
* GG (question): Scotland introduced No take Zones (NTZs). Will there be any NTZs within the proposed MPA designations here?
	+ PS (reply): There will be a thorough fisheries consultation regarding MPAs which will cover this, but there are no plans for large NTZs.
	+ CA (reply): There will be a small NTZ in the proximity of Rathlin Island. We will welcome the view of fisheries representatives at the consultation to hear opinions on this.
* RH (question): Are there any trends coming from the climate change modelling/census?
	+ TE (reply): The BTO compared trends arising from the ‘Seabird Count’ and JNCC report which showed a reduction in trends. Comparisons between reports found good correlations between data sets for confirmation.
* CA (question): Will the seabird work only be looking at ‘at-sea’ birds, or will it include inshore/wintering populations?
	+ TE (reply): Potentially will include both given the need for Population Viability Analysis.
* GG (point of mention): Wanted to highlight and make aware that there are several breeding pairs of guillemots in Glenarm marina wall.
	+ TE (reply): Is aware of the guillemot population for monitoring.
* CA (question): As a project on seabirds do you have an idea of the balance where management needs to be focused?
	+ TE (reply): At present, biosecurity and predator control are ongoing objectives that continue to need focus. Regulating marine renewables are also of particular importance.

**Breakout Room 3
Lead Kendrew Colhoun**

* DAERA marine features in all MPAs. Ongoing marine fisheries consultation on management approaches for MPA Management. Closes 31st March 2021.
* Look at the work and eradication of invasive marine mammals on Rathlin Island to enhance cliff edge nesting sites for sea-birds.
	+ Future project approach led by RSPB with a very significant application proposal under consideration.
* Tourism perspective important, make sure that tourism impacts are minimised against sea-birds especially between sea-bird sites and recreational marine crafts or recreational usage areas.

**6. Activity 2: Brainstorming: What project ideas should be scoped into MarPAMM-Irish Regions Management Proposals.**

**Breakout Room 1**

**Lead David Stevenson (DS)**

* Richard Hill (RH)
* Heidi McIlvenny (HMcI)
* Garry Burrows (GB)
* Victoria Poppleton (VP)

**RH**- One of the things is effective consultation which takes into account the recreational considerations and interpretations. The key point with management planning is to address the question of enhanced policies from the start. This needs to focus on continued enhancement and protection of MPAs.

**HMcI**- Thinking of past examples and approaches can lead to stakeholders having a perception of activity or blanket bans in areas. This is why communication and interpretation is important with all relevant stakeholders. Are the descriptors for management positive and will they be exemplary within the MPA? The focus needs to be on the benefits that management plans can produce for wider uses. This approach can be viewed as: In one small area we have positive descriptors but Zoom out into the wider environment the conditions can widely vary.

**HMcI**- The complexity of fisheries management and climate change adds to the problem of developing balanced management plans for a wide array of different activities and users. Any other conservation needs to be published for wider conversation perspectives.

**GB**- Engagement is important and helpful to shape successful and balanced management plans approach. Formally the Rathlin island environmental forum, working with European designations. The SPA is important for bird features. This forum has helped with prior engagement to focus on smaller mammal eradication, and anchorages. This is good example of managed scheme.

**GB**- Threats- The approaches towards management plan development could put some people off for other parts, designations and influences.

**RH-** The sea-birds work represents an important research focus with developments in the PVA work from Nature Scotland but there needs to be a greater UK level focus. In the case of recreational uses, define if the issue is part of MarPAMM. Use our relevant supports to disseminate information to all recreational boating users. There needs to be strategic information sharing and greater community buy-in.

**GB**- Thoughts on this- recreational activities do have effects on species and habitats, i.e. seals, sea-birds and boating impacts. Communication with these activity users and related bodies needs to be improved to highlight codes of conduct. A sheet showing wildlife schemes or adventure course training for relevant bodies could be very beneficial for conservation of seals, sea-birds and basking sharks.

GB- One weakness that needs to be considered, is to make sure that communication with users/local community isn’t lost. Need to cut out the scientific jargon and keep the communication information integrated and systematic.

RH- This is could be brought forward with a green/blue initiative with a clear system distinction between recreational/pleasure craft and guided tourism boats. These different activities need different approaches for engagement. The MarPAMM plan development needs to have continued and increased communication. Also bringing added value to the people from activities on the land. Greater use of advanced communication through animations, notice boards and interactive options.

DS- Yes we are working over the next two quarters to develop a MPA animation series with project partners and staff. This will include a stakeholder/user focus and begin to provide this clear communication and open interactive storyboards. This will help to enhance our public outreach and bring more people into the engagement profile.
**Breakout Room 2
Lead Justin Judge**

* Garry Greg (GG)
* Catriona Tosco (CT)

\*\*Technical issues were rife throughout this break out session. Only Catriona and I were present for the first 15 minutes. Garry was present for the last 15 minutes but unfortunately his audio kept failing.

* JJ (question): From each of your respective backgrounds, what would you like to see from each or any of the work package outputs?
	+ CT (reply): From early outputs, I would like to get some more guidance specifically to know what is being asked from us, how our interactions will have input into the different work packages and also how we can support these.
	+ GG (reply): Would like to see plans of input into improvement of fish stock management to facilitate improvement of wider ecosystem as an additional advantage.
* JJ (question): What benefits do you expect to be realised from the management plans?
	+ CT (reply): Wants to see support for a broad range of recreational and commercial water users where MPAs are designated while still achieving the management objectives.
	+ GG (reply): Mentioned “recruitment of fish stocks from protected areas”, but audio connection was then lost.

**Breakout Room 3** Lead Kendrew Coulhon

* Phillip Stewart
* Teresa O’Hare (ToH)
* Ellen McMahon (EMcM)

**PS**- Use this platform to express risk-awareness from activity users and the need for MPAs. From a policy perspective raise awareness of the importance of the Marine Spatial Plan, conservation objectives from all Marine Protected Areas and the planned MPA Management Plans. Improve integration between marine Spatial Plan and MPAs. The Marine Plan has not been finalised and still remains in draft. Recovery of protected habitats and not just conserve them.

**ToH**- It is clear that outreach and communication is a very important part at all levels to help develop and deliver this project. Communication and engagement with a creative and innovative focus within a digital sphere helps to strengthen and accomplish good team workings.

**PS**- Effective framework for cross-border work as part of this project with a clear framework delivery in the North and the South.

**Group**- Weakness- Could be on the overall coherence of outputs.

Everyone- MarPAMM Objectives

1. Evidence based and sound decision making for MPA Management Plan policies and approaches;
2. Enhancing sustainability needs to be at the core of the process;
3. Balance of consultation, challenges and priorities;
4. Wider benefits realised.

**Breakout Room 4**Lead Quintin Oliver (QO)

* Harry Wick
* Martin Flanigan
* Tasman Crowe

**Objectives / Needs / Desired outcomes**

1. **Evidence-based decision-making** (Improving data, refining, refreshing, updating, sharing in real time, where possible)
2. **Sustainability** (management decision-making, of the MarPAMM project, and of course, of the environment)
3. **Balancing**(building consensus around inevitably conflicting priorities, based on better evidence – see point 1.)

**Benefits**

1. Discern **what’s missing** (are the current programmes actually working, and making appropriate impacts; can we ‘measure the measures’? if ‘this’ has not changed anything, let’s try ‘that’; clear plans needed for monitoring and review)
2. **Clarity** (absolute lucid and crystal clear goals and targets, with SMART objectives)
3. Compelling **communications** delivered on time, to the right people, with the right information, leading to the desired actions.

**8. Meeting close**

JJ thanked everyone for attending and for their valuable contributions to the discussions.