

Marine Conservation Zone Task and Finish Group

Key Notes and Actions

Title of Meeting	MCZ Task and Finish Group			Date	9.4.19
Meeting Number	1	Start Time	10.15am	End Time	2.00pm
Location	Museum of Wales, Cardiff				
Attendance	Peter Davies (Chair), Jim Evans (Welsh Fishermen's Association), James Byrne (Wildlife Trust Wales), Gill Bell (Marine Conservation Society), Emily Williams (Royal Society for the Protection Birds), Alan Morgan (British Marine), Peter Barham (Seabed Users Group), Duncan Savage, Royal Yachting Association), Mark Russell (British Marine Aggregate Producers Association), Phil Hollington (Cragen Llyn a Môn), Mike Parry (Pwlhelli Partnership), Gareth Bevington (WG), Louise George (WG), Chris Parfitt (WG), Dan Crook (NRW), Natasha Lough (NRW), Louisa Jones (JNCC), Hannah Carr (JNCC), Erian Kettle (JNCC).				
Apologies	David Jones (Marine Energy Wales / PCF), Alice Collier (The Crown Estate).				

#	Agenda Item
1.	Welcome and introductions
2.	Background and scene setting
3.	The Network Assessment – process and results
4.	Developing an approach to identifying MCZs in Wales
5.	Identifying MCZs in Wales – the statutory stages
6.	Data and Evidence
7.	Next Steps
8.	Close

2. Background and scene setting	
(Presentation given)	
Notes	Actions
<p>The Welsh Government (WG) set out its ongoing commitment for Wales to complete its contribution to an ecologically coherent network of MPAs. MPAs in Wales are already making a significant contribution to the network. However, the 2016 Network Assessment by JNCC identified a number of gaps in habitats and sessile species.</p> <p>The role of the Task and Finish Group (TFG) is to identify potential MCZs to address these gaps. MCZs for highly mobile species, and the identifying of features for Skomer MCZ, is being given consideration by the Project Team and will be addressed within the project, with timings/phases to be determined.</p> <p>WG explained that the purpose the first TFG was for members to input into developing an approach/process for identifying MCZs in Welsh waters. To help discussions, a suggested stepped process drafted by the Project Team was shared with the TFG for their views. The approach will use best available evidence, seek to minimise impacts on areas of social-economic interest and will have no pre-determined level of protection for sites. It has taken into consideration the findings of the 2013 MCZ review: [https://gweddill.gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/130717task-and-finish-team-report-on-mczs-in-wales-en.pdf].</p> <p><i>Project Team in attendance: Louise George, Natasha Lough, Dan Crook, Louisa Jones and Hannah Carr.</i></p>	<p>1. WG to speak to Chair Skomer MCZ Advisory Committee about engagement with TFG.</p>
3. The Network Assessment – process and results	
(Presentation given)	
Notes	Actions
<p>JNCC provided the TFG with a summary of the 2016 Network Assessment, noting its key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irish Sea region gaps: subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal mixed sediment, fragile sponge 	<p>2. Project Team to reassess assessments using 10% and 20%</p>

<p>and anthozoan communities and pink sea fan;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Channel region gaps: subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal sand, subtidal mud, mud in deep water, sea-pen and burrowing megafauna and ocean quahog; and • The assessment also found that the offshore shelf is not sufficiently represented within the network and there are gaps in connectivity for sediment habitats. <p>TFG discussed the 10% adequacy target for the proportion of broad-scale habitats (BSH) protected within the network, which differed to the target used by Defra in its assessment (20%). The 2016 Network Assessment used the 10% minimum as recommended by OSPAR. TFG were shown the results for all BSH within Welsh MPAs where the majority of habitats exceed a 20% target (see Table 1 at end of document).</p>	<p>targets for BSH and present to TFG for further discussion.</p>
<p>4. Developing an approach to identifying MCZs in Wales</p> <p>(Presentation given)</p>	
Notes	Actions
<p>To provide a focus for further discussion, NRW presented the following stepped approach for identifying MCZs (specifically steps 1-3 of a 7 stepped suggested process, steps 4-7 covered under agenda item 5). They emphasised the simplified and hypothetical nature of some of the worked examples given within the presentation.</p> <p>Step 1 Identify Broad Areas of Search (BAoS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using best available evidence. • minimising impact on social-economic interests by excluding areas within existing infrastructure/ consented activities. • identifying where multi-feature MCZs may be an option. <p>Step 2 Identify Preferred Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using information on established social-economic interests, sensitivity and pressure assessments to narrow down the BAoS to Preferred Areas. <p>Step 3 Identify potential MCZs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refine preferred areas further and set boundaries for potential MCZs (pMCZs). <p>TFG discussed the need to be careful when putting sites forward on the basis of modelled data.</p>	<p>3. Circulate presentations to TFG.</p> <p>4. Project Team agreed that in future when presenting BAoS to TFG, to be clear where supporting data used is either modelled or non-modelled and associated levels of confidence.</p>

WG confirmed that following identification of pMCZs, there may be a need for additional survey work to further confirm presence/ distribution of a feature.

There was a suggestion from a TFG member to consider all socio-economic factors (positives and negatives) for a balanced view, including identifying the benefits from MCZs, e.g. diving, tourism and social benefits, rather than focusing solely on minimising negative socio-economic impacts.

5. Breakout Session

Notes

Each group were asked to provide views on Steps 1-3 (above) and to consider the following questions:

Q1. What do you think of this as an approach to identifying MCZs? Has anything been missed?

Q2. Would you adapt or change the approach? Why?

Q3. What would you do differently? Why?

If you support the approach:

Q4. Are there other activities that should be used in step 1 (determining broad areas of search)?

Q5. What activity data should be used to inform the identification of MCZs in steps 2 and 3?

Group 1: Natasha Lough, Louisa Jones, Erian Kettle, Chris Parfitt, Gareth Bevington, Peter Davies, Peter Barham, Gill Bell, Phil Hollington, Mike Parry and Alan Morgan.

Discussion points:

- General support for the stepped approach for identifying MCZs.
- Reflections from English Regional MCZ projects: sites were identified on low level/anecdotal evidence this resulted in low confidence in the meaningful importance of the recommendations. Highlights importance of scientific data within evidence base.
- Learn lessons from previous processes - path of least resistance and identifying sites then presenting to communities did not go down well.

- Introducing socio-economics early in the stage will save time and aggravation. Alternately it could cause prime sites to be disregarded.
- Objectivity is key in balancing ecological coherence and industry interests.
- Need to factor in buffer zones and movement of features; must be based on science.
- Need good data on social- economic activities.
- Essential to communicate the approach effectively so stakeholders are aware their input is being requested/ valued.
- Communication strategy should be published along with approach to increase public's confidence in the process. Consider role for TFG within such a strategy.
- Wider engagement and community engagement is responsibility of all - does not just rest with the WG. All members of TFG have a responsibility to deliver messages to the groups/networks they are representing.
- Transparency of the process is key - stakeholders must be aware of the process and then they can input to it.
- Crucial that BAoS are kept very broad to allow the public a chance to discuss further and give opinions.
- Consider adapting approach to involve wider stakeholder input between Step 2 and 3. So once preferred options have been identified by TFG there could be a roadshow type engagement to gather information ahead of TFG setting boundaries in step 3.
- Research should be done into the use of media and other outreach mediums to take on 'roadshows' and online.
- Education and outreach for young children who will in turn pressure their parents to take action.
- Maybe include natural capital in the information recognising that conservation comes first. Benefits of well conserved sites that can be made tangible to people.

Group 2: Louise George, Hannah Carr, Dan Crook, James Byrne, Emily Williams, Duncan Savage, Jim Evans and Mark Russell.

Discussion points:

- Consider MCZs around SSSIs to include foraging areas for birds are currently protected as terrestrial features.
- How do we explore stakeholder interests beyond Wales – Who are they? How do we engage with them?
- Non-UK interests in offshore waters – Belgium, France, Ireland, Isle of Man.
- Not just about minimising negative impacts, can flip the coin and identify MCZs in areas that would benefit socio-economic interests.
- Benefits of MCZs – considered Visit Wales survey regarding wildlife tourism.
- Adequacy targets - can we compare 10% with 20%?
- Must consider the costs for management and monitoring of sites.
- The work of the TFG needs to be transparent.

- Evidence-led process, which is clear about the nature and quality of the data and evidence used.
- Need clarity over roles and responsibility for each stage in the process. Who's responsible for what?

5. Identifying MCZs in Wales – the statutory stages

(Presentation given)

Notes	Actions
<p>WG presented the required stages in the process (Steps 4-7) from recommended MCZs (rMCZs) through to designation, with these largely guided by legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 4 WG seeks advice from NRW/JNCC on adequacy of the rMCZs including the level of confidence in evidence and whether rMCZs address the gaps identified. • Step 5 Formal Consultation Phase • Step 6 Review Response to Consultation • Step 7 Ministerial Decision to Designate MCZs <p>The timeline for each step will depend on whether further evidence is required e.g. to strengthen confidence in the presence and extent of a feature and/ or the outcome of the formal consultation.</p> <p>Under the Marine and Coastal Access Act, MCZs must be adopted and designated within 12 months of consultation, otherwise there is a requirement to re-consult.</p> <p>TFG discussed Regulatory Impact Assessments and the need to make them real and relevant; there can be a tendency to underplay the economic impacts. With regards to feature condition, the use of 'unknown' is acceptable and should be used to highlight evidence gaps. Suggestion for evidence gaps that, "if we don't know, say we don't know".</p>	N/a

6. Data and Evidence

(Presentation given)

Notes	Actions
<p>JNCC provided information on the work underway and planned to ensure the process to identifying MCZs uses best available information/ evidence. There will be two calls for action throughout the process to ensure there is access to all relevant information.</p> <p>TFG discussed standardisation of data and whether stipulation of standard formats risks the 'loss'</p>	N/a

<p>of some datasets. Issues regarding the age of datasets were noted e.g. generational data vs long-term datasets, with assessments of data confidence generally finds higher confidence value given to more recent data.</p>	
7. Next Steps	
Notes	Actions
<p>Summary of day: TFG generally supportive of the suggested stepped process with refinements. Project Team will take on board views from the today and develop the process further. Future iterations to be shared with TFG for comment by email.</p> <p>It was agreed for Project Team to set out the work (stages, resources and time) required to consider/incorporate highly mobile species into this current first phase of work, for future discussion with the TFG.</p> <p>Regarding potential for additional TFG members, there was agreement regarding the need to balance the size of the TFG to ensure it has essential people who can then feedback/ present views from and to their networks/ members. Project Team to consider how to engage with international fishing interests and whether there is a role for Welsh European Marine Site Officers.</p> <p>Next meeting: Project Team likely to reconvene TFG autumn 2019 to consider BAoS and refine to draft preferred area options. However, this is subject to progress and demand on resources available to the Project Team throughout the summer.</p>	<p>5. Project Team to refine process and circulate to TFG for comment.</p> <p>6. Project Team to consider resource needs for incorporating highly mobile species into this phase of work.</p> <p>7. Project Team to review TFG membership.</p>
Close	

Table 1: Adequacy Target % Broadscale Habitats Protected in Welsh MPAs

Irish Sea Region			
Broadscale Habitat	Area in Wal/CP2 (km2)	Area in MPAs (km2)	% in MPAs
High energy infralittoral rock	142.4	87.7	61.6
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	23.1	10.7	46.3
Low energy infralittoral rock	3.8	2.2	58.5
High energy circalittoral rock	285.0	86.0	30.2
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	725.5	65.0	16.6
Low energy circalittoral rock	0.6	0.0	,0.0
Sublittoral coarse sediment	10361.1	412.0	4.0
Sublittoral sand	2945.3	467.9	15.9
Sublittoral mud	230.6	63.3	27.5
Sublittoral mixed sediments	2944.1	86.9	3.0
Sublittoral macrophyte-dominated sediment	59.1	46.8	79.3
Sublittoral biogenic reefs	31.8	6.6	20.7

Western Channel and Celtic Seas Region			
Broadscale Habitat	Area in Wal/CP2 (km ²)	Area in MPAs (km ²)	% in MPAs
High energy infralittoral rock	31.94	22.54	70.6
Moderate energy infralittoral rock	5.93	5.31	89.6
Low energy infralittoral rock	0.18	0.18	100.0
High energy circalittoral rock	396.28	132.15	33.3
Moderate energy circalittoral rock	224.48	87.79	39.1
Low energy circalittoral rock	2.17	0.35	16.1
Sublittoral coarse sediment	3236.01	222.29	6.9
Sublittoral sand	5857.19	481.35	8.2
Sublittoral mud	2241.60	86.39	3.9
Sublittoral mixed sediments	400.18	65.74	16.4
Sublittoral macrophyte-dominated sediment	11.17	8.97	80.3
Sublittoral biogenic reefs	23.55	12.50	53.1