

CYNGOR GWYNEDD GWYNEDD COUNCIL

Draft minutes of the 22nd Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Liaison Group meeting held on the 30th May 2012 (starting 7pm) at Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog.

Present:

Cllr Caerwyn Roberts (CR)	Local Authority – Snowdonia National Park Authority (chairman)
Alison Hargrave (AH)	PLAS SAC Officer
Dafydd Roberts (DR)	RA - Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)
Mike Parry (MP)	Tourism
Bill Miller-Jones (BMJ)	Other - Diver and boat owner
Rowland Sharp (RS)	Other
Rhys Jones (RJ)	RA – Gwynedd Council
David Roberts (DavR)	Local Authority – Snowdonia National Park Authority
Cllr Ray Quant (RQ)	Local Authority – Ceredigion
Ian Roberts (IR)	Farming
Lucy Kay (LK)	RA – CCW
Bob Lowe (BL)	Recreation
Mike Bowyer (MB)	Other – Archaeology
Bill Bracewell (BB)	Recreation - Aberdyfi Partnership
Alan Gayden (AG)	Community Council – Dyffryn Ardudwy & Tal y Bont
Nia Jones (NJ)	North Wales Wildlife Trust
Cllr Gareth Roberts (GR)	Local Authority – Gwynedd Council
Dylan Griffiths (DG)	Gwynedd Council
Nick Tomos (NT)	CCW
Sion Williams (SW)	Commercial Fishing
Iwan Edgar (IE)	Other
Jen Kelly (JK)	Cardigan Bay SAC Officer
Colin Evans (CE)	Local fisherman

(PLAS – Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau)

(RA – Relevant Authority)

Introduction

CR welcomed everyone to the meeting. Due to some new faces everyone introduced themselves.

1. Apologies:

Glynne Roberts (GR)	Commercial Fishing - Llŷn Inshore Fishermen's Association
Jilly Whipp (JW)	Wildlife
Helen Bickell (HB)	Wildlife
Huw Davies (HD)	RA – Gwynedd Council

2. Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1 Item 3.5 (AH to send BMJ a copy of the email received from Magnox regarding Trawsfynydd): ***Action completed.***
- 3.2 Item 4.1 (Liaison Group members to inform AH of any groups or individuals that should be involved in the seagrass project): ***Action completed.***
- 3.3 Item 4.1 (Liaison Group members to inform AH of any groups or individuals that should be involved in the Chinese Mitten Crab project): ***Action completed.***
- 3.4 Item 4.1 (Liaison Group members to look at the Wales activity Mapping website and note any concerns or ideas and send them to AH): No comments received. ***Action completed.***
- 3.5 Item 4.1 (AH to contact Gwynedd Council re litter collection on Aberdaron beach): Gwynedd Council collect bags of litter when volunteers let them know they are conducting a beach clean. They do not clean the beaches on a regular basis between the end September and March. AH sent a letter to IR regarding this issue. ***Action completed.***
- 3.6 Item 6 (AH to send the Borth coastal defence presentation to Liaison Group members via email and a hard copy to AG): ***Action completed.***

4. Update from the SAC Officer

Update on work undertaken October 2011 – May 2012

AH outlined the work that had been accomplished since the last meeting:

- 2 presentation
- 8 school visits (in addition to the Cool Seas visits)
- Produced the 2012 events leaflet
- 2011 events were successful they included guided walks, beach fun days and marine art workshops
- Attended a number of shows including – Sioe Nefyn, Sioe Caernarfon, Botanical beats and the Sea Food Festival
- Organised and run a training session for the invasive non native species the Chinese Mitten Crab with the North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT)
- Produced a number of press releases and articles relating to the SAC
- Distributed SAC publicity material
- Produced issue 9 of the newsletter and distributed it to over 600 outlets
- Updated the SAC website with news items and events. A new projects section has been added.
- Contributed to marine planning within Gwynedd Council
- Attended a number of meetings to promote partnership working
- Met with the National Coastwatch Institute Porth Dinllaen, there is a link to the SAC website and they send AH interesting wildlife sightings
- Updated the Management Plan. 60% of the topic action plans are now updated and are ready to be sent out.
 - Sections completed:
 - Ports, harbours, marinas and shipping
 - Half of Exploitation of living resources
 - Exploitation on non living resources

- Water quality, pollution and waste disposal
- Other activities – this includes archaeology, forestry, military activities, non natives etc
- Sections left to complete:
 - Half of Exploitation of living resources
 - Recreation
 - Construction of coastal and marine structures and facilities

AH has also worked on several projects to help implement the SAC management plan:

Turning Tide project:

Litter was identified as being one of PLAS priority issues. This project was set up to help tackle that issue. A number of high profile beach cleans have been run in partnership with other organisations, these were followed by a raising awareness events such as rockpool rambles to raise awareness about the SAC. This project is now complete. A final report is now available. A competition has also been held with local schools to produce a poster to try and encourage people not to throw litter. There were two winners and the work of such a high standard that we used the work of the runners up to create a series of stickers.

Management of the seagrass bed at Porth Dinllaen

The seagrass at Porth Dinllaen is a component of the intertidal mudflats and sandflats feature. This feature is in unfavourable condition at this location due to anchoring and mooring. This project is looking into ways of managing the seagrass in way that still allows users to use the site but also conserves the seagrass and brings the mudflats and sandflats back up into favourable condition. The work done so far:

- Initial report – this looked into management options, conducted a literature review and provided an overview of the current and past situation Porth Dinllaen. This report is available.
- Set up a steering group – SAC Officer, CCW, EA, National Trust, RYA and Llyn Fisherman's Association
- Stakeholder engagement – this is a vital part of the project. This has been a huge stumbling block for many projects. An engagement plan has been produce. AH has already spoken to the RYA and the Llyn Fisherman's Association and both are supportive and have joined the steering group.
- A selection of publicity material has been produced, a briefing note, poster, drinks mat and leaflet.
- A company called SEACAMS is carrying out some specific work in Porth Dinllaen for this project. This is at no expense to the SAC. The two projects:
 - Ecological project – GPS location of all the moorings, studying some of the mooring types and size of scars. Fish studies to find out which species uses the bed. Gather information for a snorkel trail. SEACAMS needs a non public body to sign the paper work for each project to enable them to draw down funding. For this project the signatory partners are the National Trust, Llyn Adventures and Waterline.
 - Eco mooring project – the project will look into adapting exsisting moorings to lessen the impact on seagrass. The aim of this is to be as cheap and practical as possible. They will also look into different types of eco moorings in more detail and decide which one will work best in Porth Dinllaen.
- A number of student projects will begin shortly specifically to undertake infaunal and fish studies.

- The project hopes to set up a volunteer diving project to map the moorings to determine type of mooring, its location and scar size if present.
- The management options that the project is looking into at the moment:
 - Voluntary anchor zone
 - Use of eco moorings / adaptations for existing moorings
 - Snorkel trail

Chinese Mitten Crab Project

This project is looking into the environmental parameters that the mitten crab needs to survive in the river environment. This could be used as a tool to determine which rivers the mitten crab could potentially invade. The mitten crab is a highly invasive non-native that has already invaded the Dee and one live male has been discovered in the Conwy. Data loggers are soon to be placed in the Dee, Conwy and the Mawddach.

SAC Funding

Funding is secure until 2013. AH has also applied for funding from the Llyn AONB SDF fund for the next three years.

5 Highly Protected Marine Conservation Zones (hPMCZs)

AH outlined the aims for this agenda item:

- Short introduction to the hPMCZ consultation from AH.
- An opportunity to ask questions / give views

AH noted a couple of points before the hPMCZ introduction:

AH noted that she had spoken to several members of the group and appreciated their input. AH suggested that the Liaison Group submit a joint response to this consultation. AH asked the group to keep this in mind during this agenda item and the group can determine a course of action at the end of the item.

AH noted that the Welsh Government was invited to attend the meeting as it is their consultation but they declined. Gwynedd Council has since spoken to Diana Reynolds and she said that they did not have enough staff to send someone along. AH also requested more information such as presentations or a summary document as they have been to other meetings but they said that the consultation document is all that is available.

In the absence of a Welsh Government representative AH summarise the consultation noting that the wording used came directly out of the consultation document.

Introduction to hPMCZs:

- The UK administrations are committed to completing an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas (MPAs). The network will be a key tool in contributing towards achieving good environmental status under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- Wales' contribution towards the wider UK network will be made up of European Marine Sites (SACs and SPAs), intertidal SSSIs, intertidal Ramsar sites, the Marine Nature Reserve at Skomer plus the new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). Wales already has a number of such sites covering approximately 75% of the coastline and 36% of territorial seas. The intention is that MCZs will supplement existing sites.

- The Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 gave Welsh Ministers new powers and tools to better protect and manage the marine environment of Wales. This includes a new mechanism for the conservation of marine biodiversity through the designation of MCZs.
- The Welsh Government's approach to using the new MCZ power is to supplement the existing MPAs in Wales with a limited number of highly protected sites. England for example are going down a different route and are designating MCZ as well as highly protected MCZ as their coverage of SACs is not sufficient.
- The intention is to allow sites to function as naturally as possible to fulfil three aims:
 - To contribute to ecosystem recovery
 - To contribute to ecosystem resilience
 - And to develop our understanding of natural ecosystem functioning
- Within these highly protected sites there will be no extraction or deposition and potentially damaging or disturbing activities will be assessed and managed.
- AH then referred to pages within the document that gave examples of extraction, deposition and damaging and disturbing activities.
- The consultation presents 10 potential sites, on the basis that the Welsh Government intends to designate no more than 3-4 sites. The boundaries of these sites are not set and can be altered.
- The Welsh Government is delivering this project through 3 key groups:
 - The Steering Group to steer the whole process, making decisions at critical stages of the project and ultimately making the final recommendations to Welsh Ministers.
 - The Technical Advisory Group a group of technical experts covering ecological, social and economic issues, and providing the technical advice to the Steering Group.
 - The Stakeholder and Citizens Engagement Group.
- At the beginning of this process the Welsh Government consulted on the site selection guidance for this process. The first suite of site were chosen on a purely biological basis. Each habitat was given a score, with most habitats having a score of 1 i.e. most habitats were not prioritised in any way. So the sites that score highly are the ones that have a large number of habitats in a relatively small area. Subsequent stages would take socio economics into account.
- AH then referred to the timetable within the document.
- The approach to identifying hpMCZs is different from how marine protected areas have been identified in the past. Here the focus is on the whole site contribution to the marine environment and its contribution to ecosystem recovery and greater resilience and not on the protection of specific examples of quality environments. The sites have been selected on the basis of their habitat heterogeneity (i.e. a large number of habitats on a relatively small area).
- AH showed maps of the proposed sites relevant to the SAC.

The group discussed the consultation and the idea of hpMCZs. Please note that the following points were made by individual members and are not the agreed view point of the group. The following points and observations were made:

GR - The effect on both the economy and biodiversity need to be considered. There doesn't seem to be many advantages. To make sites like this work you need local buy in. It seems odd to leave large bits of the SAC out.

BL - Many members use and respect the sea and would like to learn more about the marine environment. It is a concern that they only factored in high level socio-economic issues.

It is a threat to marine traders in Pwllheli. This consultation seems premature when the Welsh Government is still consulting on the Living Wales and the Single Body documents. This doesn't seem logical.

MP – Agree that it doesn't make sense to come to a conclusion about this without known the outcome of the Living Wales and Single Body consultations. This is a serious threat to the economy.

MB - The end of Sarn Badrig would make a good hpMCZ.

SW - If the north of the Llyn was designated 14 fishermen would be out of business. There are approximately 40 static gear fishermen that fish around the Llyn. They contribute towards the Llyn industry. Vessels under 10m around the Llyn are sustainable. The science behind these designations is weak. The advantage is small when compared to the loss. Gear displacement needs to be taken into account. Some fishermen could use nets instead which are more harmful to the environment. The process so far has been shocking. Not heard of anyone pro these sites. The Welsh Government only has 20 enforcement officers to cover the whole of Wales. There is no more money in the pot so how can they enforce these sites? The Welsh Government can't deal with present issues such as illegal scallop dredging. At the moment local users act as eyes and ears on the site. The whole of Wales needs protecting not just small areas.

GR - The Llyn is species rich and has worked along side the fishing industry. Some species will prosper but some will suffer. So the situation may turn out to be worse.

MP - This is the first time the north has had more than the south.

NT - CCW are not here to defend the consultation. The way it has been handled is a shame. This is the opportunity to have your say. Boundaries are not set. There is a lot of evidence world wide that these areas work. Fish populations can increase. But public support is essential. If we lose local produce our carbon footprint increases.

IR - The funding for the processing plant on the Llyn and the hpMCZ consultation don't go together. What effect will they have on the sea?

CE - Pleased that CCW recommended consultation. Flamborough has only been in place a couple of years so you can't draw any conclusions from that. Most of the examples given are from tropical seas, you can't compare temperate and tropical areas. There is a paper on the effects of Lundy marine nature reserve. 9 years is a relatively short period of time. Findings so far indicate that the effect on sessile and non commercial species is minimal. It was noted that there are less velvet swimming crabs. There is evidence that fish populations can increase but this evidence is from tropical waters.

NT - There is a leaflet available called Science of Marine Reserves.

CE - This looks like a sales brochure.

NT - These areas would act as reference zones to see what happen when a system is left to develop naturally. It is worth having these areas. There are possible benefits e.g. tourism, biodiversity, fisheries.

MB - After 40 years of diving, these areas are needed. Are the areas set or can we still make suggestions on where they could go? No one polices protected wrecks.

RQ - Can you steer them towards certain sites? So maybe we take one of the 4 around the Llyn?

LK - I have seen highly protected areas in the tropics and in temperate. They are unpredictable. You can find evidence either way. There is a lot we don't know about how marine ecosystems function. An undisturbed site might show us how we should manage the marine environment. There are big changes coming with regards to climate change. We need areas to function well to enable the marine environment to continue to provide ecosystem services. We need to discuss the potential role of sites such as these and not dismiss them out of hand.

LK - The site selection process is not what CCW advised. CCW advised that the process should be stakeholder lead from the outset. The Welsh Government was not keen due to cost. It has been a proscribed process. The public should have had a say as to where the sites would go. It is important to make any suggestions you think would be beneficial, all aspects are open for comment / suggestion.

SW - There is a £2.2 million project running relating to fishing and stock assessment. This project will look at problems. Fisheries are an asset. The sites are small but they are relatively large on the Llyn. More research is needed. The Welsh Government should have engaged sooner.

DavR – We are at stage 4 already. The Welsh Government sends out many consultations. I didn't dislike no take zones. But it's been disappointing.

DG – The economy department with Gwynedd Council supports the users of the site. We need to acknowledge the effect on the economy. We need figures.

RS – There is concern for tourism, fishermen and anglers if this goes ahead. Displacement needs to be considered and the effect this could have on the SAC features.

IE – There is something in this. There is the potential for eco tourism. This has not been handled in the correct way. It covers things that are not needed e.g. walking. They should have taken the silly things out.

BMJ – The restrictions will be far stricter. The areas will not be manageable. You can't count boats / divers. The best stakeholders to look after the area are the fishermen. The worst damage is from large offshore vessels. This is not being policed. There big issues that should be addressed first.

MB – Sarn y Bwch is 6m long and there are a lot of fish there. This could make a good hpMCZ. Under the marine bill technically you would need a licence to build a sandcastle.

NT – We need fishermen and local people on board or the areas will be unmanageable. In some European countries the fishermen have asked for these sites. We need to remember that we have lost some species from around the Llyn such as crawfish, herring and skate. The sea is not ok as it is. Fishing around the Llyn is good and sustainable. But there are big benefits to these areas. Don't think it will be possible via this consultation but we shouldn't throw the idea out.

BL – Back to the SAC, there are lots of approaches to marine management. What's been achieved? The Liaison Group works. It has been positive. Lessons were learnt from the UK Marine SACs Project. We need to examine the best way of doing things.

CR – Many species are declining e.g. curlew, lapwing, skylark, hedgehog, grouse etc. But we need balance.

LK – SAC management tried to take a different approach to that of the highly protected approach. The SAC is one approach but it is limited. Legislative framework only protects the features.

MP – It is not a matter of saying no but we need to give rationale. Who is going to read through the responses if the Welsh Government is understaffed? How is it going to be managed as a consultation?

CR – This has been a good discussion. There is a lot of worry over livelihoods.

MP – Is anyone happy with this consultation?

No response.

The group noted that it was disappointing that Welsh Government did not attend.

RQ – Dyfi biosphere is not included.

Action: *AH to prepare a response on behalf of the group and send it round for comment.*

6 Any issue of concern or interest

None.

7 Time and date of next meeting

To be confirmed.