

## **CYNGOR GWYNEDD GWYNEDD COUNCIL**

**Draft minutes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Liaison Group meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> July 2009 (starting 7pm) at Plas Tan y Bwlch, Maentwrog.**

### **Present:**

Bill Bracewell	Recreation - Aberdyfi Partnership
Mike Bowyer	Other - Archaeology
Lucy Kay	Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) (notes)
Mike Parry	Tourism - Llyn Fisherman's Association
Cllr Caerwyn Roberts	Snowdonia National Park Authority (chairman)
Bill Miller-Jones	Other - Diver and boat owner
Lee Oliver	Keep Wales Tidy
Cllr Ray Quant	Local Councillor - Ceredigion
Rhys Jones	Gwynedd Council
Alan Gaydon	Community Council (Dyffryn Ardydwy & TalyBont)
Lynette Gaydon	Member of public
Dafydd Roberts	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Rob Strachan	Environment Agency Wales
Victoria Hickin	North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (NW&NWSFC)
Virginia Prieto	North Western and North Wales Sea Fisheries Committee (NW&NWSFC)
Victoria Hobson	Swansea University
Rod Penrose	UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme

### **Introduction**

Caerwyn Roberts welcomed everyone to the meeting. As there were a number of new faces everyone introduced themselves.

### **1. Apologies:**

Alison Hargrave	SAC Officer
Liz Allen	Ceredigion County Council (CCC)
Emyr Williams	Snowdonia National Park Authority
Sion Williams	Llŷn Pot Fishermens' Association
Glynne Roberts	Llŷn Inshore Fishermen's Association
Phil Oliver	Environment Agency
Alf Bowen	Tourism - Aberdyfi Partnership
Barry Davies	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 3.4 (Alison to organise a speaker to talk about the British Marine Life Rescue project): Rod Penrose explained the role of BMLR in his presentation.

***Action completed.***

- 3.2 Item 5b (1) (Rowland Sharp to send Gill Bell a picture of a boom made out of cotton bud sticks): Action carried forward to the next meeting.

**Action:** *Rowland Sharp to send Gill Bell a picture of a boom made out of cotton bud sticks*

- 3.3 Item 5c (11) (Alison to look into the possibility of presenting litter as a discussion topic at a FERAC meeting): It was confirmed that Emyr Williams had raised this with FERAC. Mike Parry reported that Barry Davies was looking into disposal of litter by fishermen without fishermen having to be charged for waste disposal.

**Action completed.**

- 3.4 Item 5e (Alison to look into setting up a focus group to discuss the litter issue further): Alison has set up a group via e-mail and the group will meet shortly to discuss the topic. All members of the Liaison Group and the relevant Authorities group will be invited to attend the meeting.

**Action ongoing.**

- 3.5 Item 6.3 (Mike Bowyer to forward the details of the Shoreline Management Plan 2 contract and minutes of the meeting he attended to Alison and Alison to forward them on to the group): Subsequent to the meeting Alison confirmed that Mike Bowyer had sent her the information. Alison added that the information exceeded 20 pages and several spreadsheets. Environmentally it would be best to send out this information via e-mail and if anyone wants a hard copy to get in touch with Alison (this will be highlighted in the cover letter sent out with the minutes).

**Action:** *Alison to send out information about the shoreline management plan to the Liaison Group and the Relevant Authorities via e-mail and send a hard copy to those that request it.*

#### **4 Update from the SAC Officer**

##### **4.1 Work undertaken March – July 2009**

Prior to the meeting Alison had provided a summary of the work that has been undertaken since the last meeting in March 2009.

- Alison has visited 11 primary schools, one secondary school and one nature club giving presentations, undertaking field work and workshops
- Alison has organised and run two teachers training sessions, one for primary school teachers and one for secondary school teachers. Both were well attended and both had excellent feedback.
- Alison has attended Sioe Nefyn, Sioe Caernarfon and the Sea Food Festival with the mobile exhibition and leaflets. Alison will also be attending the Eisteddfod in Bala with the mobile exhibition.
- Alison has had input into the following projects:
  - Natur Gwynedd LBAP
  - Marine Ecosystems Group
  - New Maritimes studies GCSE
- Alison has organised and run one Relevant Authorities meeting and there has been one meeting of the Welsh GEMS.
- Alison has given a presentation about the SAC and planning issues to the planning department of Gwynedd Council as part of a training day organised by the Gwynedd Council Biodiversity team.
- Alison has been on Galwad Cynnar, Radio Cymru, to discuss the SAC and various marine issues.
- Alison has helped undertake a piddock survey in Tywyn in response to a planning application, no piddocks were found.
- Alison continues to update the SAC website with the latest SAC news and publications.

- Alison continues to update and revise the management plan.
- An events leaflet has been produced in partnership with the biodiversity team in Gwynedd Council to advertise events that have been organised to raise awareness of the SAC and our local wildlife.

#### **4.2 SAC Officer work programme April – October 2009**

Prior to the meeting Alison had provided a summary of the SAC Officer work programme from April – October 2009. In October / November 2009 Alison will begin her maternity leave. Details of maternity cover will be provided at the next meeting.

Summary of SAC Officer work programme for April – October 2009:

- Revising and updating Management Plan
- Maintaining and updating the website
- Maintaining both the Liaison Group and the Relevant Authorities group
- Produce issue 7 of the newsletter
- To organise and run the marine events advertised in the events leaflet

Bill Miller-Jones pointed out an error in the English text of the events leaflet for the 14<sup>th</sup> August event – the Lion Hotel is in Tudweiliog, not Chwilog as stated in the leaflet under ‘Location’. Subsequent to the meeting Alison explained that the mistake had been spotted but only after the leaflet had been printed. It was decided that it was not financially or environmentally viable to re print the leaflet and apologise for the error.

#### **4.3 Management Plan**

Prior to the meeting Alison explained that she is still working to revise and update the management plan. She added that CCW had nearly completed their section of work, i.e. how the features could be affected by the activities covered in the management plan. The next step is to assign actions to the activities. When these are in draft format they will be sent out to the Liaison Group for comments.

#### **4.4 Litter**

Prior to the meeting Alison explained that the last Liaison Group meeting had been very successful. Due to the enthusiasm and expertise in the group with regards to litter Alison has set up a focus group to discuss the topic further and to help write the section of the management plan dealing with this topic. Once a meeting has been arranged the all Liaison Group members will be invited.

### **5 Presentations**

Caerwyn Roberts welcomed Victoria Hobson and Rod Penrose who were giving presentations at the meeting.

#### **5.1 Victoria Hobson: EcoJel project- Identifying and managing the jellyfish threats and opportunities in the Irish Sea**

Victoria gave a presentation about the EcoJel project which is a four year project (2008-2012) funded by Interreg IVa and the EU’s Ireland/Wales programme through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project is a collaboration between Swansea University and University College Cork and builds upon the success of the Irish Sea Turtle Leatherback project. More information about the project can be found at: <http://www.swan.ac.uk/bs/turtle/index.htm> and by following the link to the EcoJel project and/or at <http://www.jellyfish.ie> .

The aim of the EcoJel project is to identify and manage the jellyfish threats and opportunities in the Irish Sea. Jellyfish blooms are predicted to become more abundant in our coastal seas as a result of climate change, and their overall ecosystem impact (both positive and negative) and consequently socio-economic importance may similarly increase. The EcoJel project is aiming to help tackle the issues of the changing importance and roles of jellyfish driven by climate change by:

- 1) Identifying the threats of jellyfish nuisance blooms to bathers and the economic impact of this. The project is also looking to develop guidance on the best way to treat jellyfish stings.
- 2) Establishing the movements and origin of pest jellyfish through the development of innovative tracking technologies.
- 3) Identifying the impacts (positive and negative) of jellyfish on fisheries and aquaculture, and to develop ecosystem models to explore outcomes of predicted climate change scenarios.
- 4) Investigating emerging markets for jellyfish products and the potential for tourism benefits of recreational hotspots for divers to swim with blooms of giant jellyfish.

Victoria provided information on:

- Why jellyfish are important within the marine ecosystem and their positive and negative impacts on human uses of the sea
- Jellyfish populations, the things that affect jellyfish populations and work being undertaken to try and determine whether jellyfish populations are increasing.

Part of the project work involves tagging large barrel jellyfish (*Rhizostoma octopus*) to investigate their lifecycle and ecology. There had been 40 jellyfish tagged and 11 returned tags so far in the Carmarthen Bay area. The project is encouraging people to report sightings of jellyfish and to return any tags that are found washed up on beaches.

It was agreed that it would be useful to have a follow up presentation about the findings of the project towards its completion in 2012.

**Action: SAC Officer / Relevant Authorities to arrange for update on the findings of the project in 2012**

Questions / comments:

- a. Vicki Hickin: How much of a problem are jellyfish for fisheries? Victoria Hobson (VH): Have been in the past. Project will help to determine scale of this.
- b. Mike Bowyer: Could and increase in jellyfish mean a reduction in species such as starfish and lobster as all were after the same food (plankton), at least in their larval stages, and jellyfish eat the larval stages (plankton) of other marine species? VH: Potentially an increase in jellyfish could affect the populations of other species such as starfish, lobster and fish as they eat the larval stages of all these species. The EcoJel project aims to identify what larval species the jellyfish are eating and if this will have an impact on other populations. They may also be detrimental to fish populations by eating the same zooplankton prey.
- c. Rhys Jones: Have there been any new species of jellyfish? VH: There is evidence that there are some new species turning up.
- d. Lucy Kay: Where do the adult jellyfish of the different species in the UK originate from? VH: This is not known.

- e. Dafydd Roberts: A return of 11 tags from 40 taggings is a very high return rate. VH: appears that the jellyfish in embayments such as Tremadog Bay and Carmarthen Bay stay within the bays.
- f. Vicki Hickin: Which commercial fish species may be helped by jellyfish acting as nurseries and aggregating small fish? VH: Not sure of the species, but all are gadoids.
- g. Mike Parry: What's the view on the impact of seawater temperature? VH: Seawater temperature is rising and will have an effect on jellyfish. Some species prefer more sheltered embayments whilst others are able to survive well in more oceanic conditions.
- h. Lee Oliver: Has any tracking been done with GPS? VH: No, as GPS doesn't work underwater. The tagging work being done with the jellyfish under this project is a new area of work.
- i. Alan Gaydon: Is there any influence of Sarn Badrig in driving the aggregations in Tremadog Bay? VH: Water currents do have an effect, and anything that influences water circulation is likely to play a role.
- j. Lucy Kay: Are there any jellyfish fisheries in European waters? VH: No, not currently. Populations of jellyfish not currently sufficient to support a fishery.
- k. Lee Oliver: Are some species more flavoursome than others? VH: Apparently, yes! *Rhizostoma* (the barrel jellyfish) is one of the favoured species.
- l. Lucy Kay: Is there a link between this project and the jellyfish recording by the Marine Conservation Society? VH: Aim is to link up and share data.
- m. Lee Oliver: Have any links been established with other water users by the project? VH: Yes, with divers, Keep Wales Tidy, Royal Yachting Association and Environment Agency Blue Flag awards (jellyfish are an issue for tourism).

## **5.2 Rod Penrose: The UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Project**

Rod explained his talk was not specifically about the British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR) as presented on the agenda, but was about a UK wide project on addressing marina mammal and turtle strandings in the UK, although he explained the role of BDMLR.

The UK Cetacean Strandings Investigation Project started in 1990 following the phocine distemper virus outbreak in 1988 and death of seals around the UK. The project is a collaborative undertaking involving the Natural History Museum (London), Zoological Society London, Defra, CEFAS, Scottish Agricultural College, University of Liverpool and Marine Environmental Monitoring. Funding is provided by Defra, Welsh Assembly Government and Scottish Government.

The project coordinates information about marine mammal and turtle strandings around the UK in order to provide an accurate picture of what species occur and, through post-mortem of a proportion of the stranded animals, information on cause of death, disease, contaminants, reproductive patterns, diet and general health of the population of a particular species can be obtained. The information provides data about local and seasonal distributions of different species and provides baseline data to detect outbreaks of disease or unusual increases in mortality.

Funding for the strandings programme of work has been cut recently although other species have been added to the list that the project is meant to cover, e.g. basking shark. The decrease in funding means that not all reported strandings can be investigated and this will have implications for the quality and quantity of data that is collected.

The strandings network relies on volunteers. Rod highlighted Gwynedd Council as being the best local authority in Wales for reporting strandings and thanks go to Barry Davies and the harbour masters in particular for this. Gwynedd Council had also been the first local authority to make use of digital cameras when reporting strandings – the images were very useful and helped Rod to determine whether a stranded animal would be valuable for post-mortem or not.

Stranded marine animals are not new – there is a record of a stranded dead leatherback turtle in Pwllheli harbour in 1908. Rod described the issues associated with strandings of different species and some of the post-mortem results of the marine mammal and turtle strandings that he had dealt with.

Harbour porpoise are the most commonly stranded species (this is the most abundant cetacean in the UK). Around the Welsh coast, the most common reason of death of harbour porpoise is due to attack by bottlenose dolphin (recognised by things such as teeth rake marks on the carcass and deep trauma where the harbour porpoise have been hit).

The relevant numbers for marine mammal, turtle and basking shark strandings in Wales are:

- Live stranding:
  - RSPCA, Tel: 08705 555999, or
  - Welsh Marine Life Rescue (WMLR), Tel 01646 692943, or
  - British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR), Tel: 01825 765546
- Dead stranding:
  - Marine Environmental Monitoring (National Strandings Line), Tel: 01348 875000
  - There is also a facility in the Welsh stranding network to send in camera phone images of dead strandings on Tel: 07773 592227
  - Digital images can also be e-mailed to: [info@strandings.demon.co.uk](mailto:info@strandings.demon.co.uk)

Further information about the UK strandings project can be found at: [www.ukstrandings.org](http://www.ukstrandings.org)

There is further information about the Welsh strandings network at: [www.strandings.com](http://www.strandings.com)

There is also a facility in the Welsh strandings network to send in camera phone

A pdf copy of the leaflet circulated by Rod at the meeting about the project is available on the Cardigan Bay SAC website: [www.cardiganbaysac.org.uk](http://www.cardiganbaysac.org.uk) under ‘publications / reporting & strandings’.

Questions / comments:

- a. Vicki Hickin: How many reports of cetaceans dying because of entanglement with netting? Rod Penrose (RP): Numbers had been reducing, although there seems to have been a small, recent increase. Recent budget cuts may be leading to under-recording of strandings.
- b. Mike Parry: Does it appear that bottlenose dolphin killing harbour porpoise for fun? RP: Yes.
- c. Dafydd Roberts: Are the tough plastic packing bands used to hold packaging together a particular problem? RP: Not specifically identified as such so far, but any work to reduce their usage would be welcomed.

- d. Lucy Kay: Is the killing of porpoise by bottlenose dolphins a recent thing? RP: Yes. This behaviour is only known from the Moray Firth, Wales and to a lesser degree in Cornwall, as well as from locations on the east coast of America.
- e. Lucy Kay: Why do some individual cetaceans have a high parasite loading? RP: They just seem to pick them up.
- f. Vicki Hickin: If entanglement in netting looks like it is increasing, what type of netting? Would be useful to liaise over this. RP: Yes, it would be useful to discuss this. Previously fishermen asked to anonymously report and land their by-catch so that it could be included in the strandings records, although only one report ever provided. The reduction in funding means that there is less support to follow up such reports now.

There was a brief discussion about the role of volunteers in checking out and reporting sightings. It was agreed that it would be useful to see if accuracy of reporting could be improved, for example by people who are out on beaches undertaking beach cleans.

**Action:** **Alison to talk to Keep Wales Tidy and Barry Davies to see if there was something that could be usefully done to raise more awareness about reporting stranded animals and improve the detail of reporting and identification.**

## **6 Any issue of concern or interest**

- 6.1 Bill Bracewell queried the linkage between the Dyfi biosphere reserve (which had recently been declared) and the SAC in relation to how proposals under the biosphere reserve would be dealt with. Lucy Kay responded that proposals would still need to go through any existing procedures such as planning, but said that it would be useful to get further clarification about a more strategic view on the biosphere reserve plans and initiatives and the SAC.

**Action:** **Lucy Kay to seek clarification from biosphere reserve staff in CCW about strategic planning for the biosphere and its links with the SAC.**

**Action:** **Alison to look into whether a presentation on the Dyfi biosphere would be useful for the group at a future meeting.**

- 6.2 Cllr Ray Quant raised the issue of coastal management and the Shoreline Management Plan process SMP2. He said that it would be useful to know what is coming up in relation to this, as there are going to have to be serious discussions and decisions in relation to future management of the coast. It was agreed that this would be a useful topic for a presentation to and discussion by the Liaison Group.

**Action:** **Alison to contact Huw Davies about a presentation to the Liaison Group on SMP2 and the proposed work under this.**

**Action:** **Alison to look into arranging a presentation about coastal processes within the SAC and what is known about this (linking to a presentation about the SMP2 process and aims).**

## **7 Time and date of next meeting**

Cllr Caerwyn Roberts drew the meeting to a close by thanking everyone for coming and thanked Victoria and Rod for their informative presentations.

Next meeting **provisionally** scheduled for Wednesday September 30<sup>th</sup> 2009, 7 – 9pm in Plas Tan y Bwlch.

**Action:** Alison to confirm whether she can make this date with Caerwyn and confirm and book availability of the meeting room at Plas tan y Bwlch, and confirm date with the Liaison Group