

## MORAY FIRTH RENEWABLES ADVISORY GROUP (MFRAG) MEETING MINUTES

<b>Meeting</b>	MFRAG Main Group	
<b>Date</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> April 2022. 09:30 – 13:30	
<b>Location</b>	Microsoft TEAMS call	
<b>Attendees</b>	SAMS	Ben Wilson (BW) [Chair]
	Marine Scotland Licensing Operations (MS-LOT)	Gayle Holland (GH), John Malcolm (JM), John Mackay (JM)
	Marine Scotland Science (MSS)	Jared Wilson (JW), Ross Gardiner (RG), Kirsty Wright (KWr), Janelle Braithwaite, Sue O’Brien (SO)
	Marine Scotland Planning & Policy (MS-PP)	Janelle Braithwaite (JB)
	NatureScot (NS)	Chris Eastham (CE), Malcolm Fraser (MF)
	Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)	Alan Wells (AW),
	BOWL	Joe Deimel (JD), Heather Shaw (HS), Fiona Wilson (FW)
	Moray East	Eliana Mercy Araujo (EMA), Ruaridh Danaher (RD)
	Moray West	Nuria Abad-Oliva (NA)
<b>Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members to review the updated distribution list attached in the email.</li> <li>JD to propose date for SSE digital team puffin project presentation.</li> <li>JW to confirm if PrePARED receivers are compatible with tags included in smolts as part of the AST?</li> <li>MFRAG group to send any comments to the proposed scour survey approach by 22 July 2022 (date suggested post meeting)</li> <li>Next MFRAG main group meeting to be scheduled around October/November 2022 (to be confirmed, post meeting suggestion). Moray West to send the doodle poll to agree on date.</li> </ol>	

<b>1. Introductions and Purpose of Meeting</b>	
<p>RD commenced the call explaining that there was an error in the list of invitees for the call, which was based on latest MFRAG distribution list from February 2022. RD thanked those who joined at the last minute.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> members to review and update the distribution list, to ensure all parties have the correct attendees named (list attached below and to the email with this meeting minute).</p>	
<b>Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members to review the updated distribution list attached below and in the email with this meeting minute.</li> </ol>



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## 2. Review of Minutes of Meeting from previous meeting (29<sup>th</sup> October 2021)

Status of Actions from previous meeting:

1. MH to circulate an email with a summary of the strategic research proposal for data archive.  
Completed. Email sent on 29 October.
2. TI and MFRAG secretariat to include OFTO environmental monitoring work in the 3-month lookahead (and indicative longer-term lookahead) survey timetables.  
This has been considered.
3. RD to provide location of seabed object (detected during Moray East overtrawl) to MH to check against dive survey records for the area.  
Completed. Clarified that this is not classified as an object. So far it has been considered as a seabed featured, although this will be confirmed after geophysical surveys in the area.
4. JD to speak to SSE digital team about potential for a puffin project presentation to MFRAG.  
SSE agreed in presenting to MFRAG. Date to be provided, suggested next MFRAG-GEN call.
5. Moray East to set up doodle poll for next meeting (April/May 2022).  
Completed. Current meeting.
6. MFRAG secretariat to organise MFRAG-MM meeting for early 2022 (before April/May main group meeting).  
Completed. Meeting held in February 2022.

### Actions

2. JD to propose date for SSE digital team puffin project presentation.

## 3. PrePARED

Sue O'Brien provides an introduction to the PrePARED programme:

- Prepared is being carried out as a means of increasing understanding of predator/prey relationships around OWF.
- This will improve ability to understand cumulative impacts of OFW on predator and prey and how they change with new offshore wind farms
- Four workstreams are proposed (A, B, C and D), of which Workstream B in the Moray Firth. Workstream B/WP3 includes fish surveys in and around OWF, fish telemetry work, fish tagging - cod

and haddock in Moray East and Beatrice. In WP4, the results of WP3 will be combined to marine mammals passive acoustic monitoring results obtained through the MMMP, to understand marine mammals and prey response.

- Alan Wells - asked a question about if Diadromous fish have been considered in the development of the study?
- Jared Wilson (JW) responded noting that MSS provided the Atlantic salmon trust with 50 tags, which they are using across Scotland. They are reviewing the feasibility to check to see if these tags are picked up by the PrePARED receivers. He clarified that given the time available, it has been very challenging to arrange for diadromous fish to be included in the work. Opportunities to expand that in the future may be considered.
- Alan wells - noted that perhaps it would be better to tag fish at different rivers from those currently undertaken by the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) as the fish from those rivers seem to be moving along the south of the moray firth. AW also asked if the receivers were compatible with the other tags that the AST have installed in smolts. **Action:** JW to confirm.
- Ben Wilson noted that there is a current NERC call for proposals – ECOWind - to look at the ecological consequences of offshore wind, including focus on lower trophic levels.
- Sue O'Brien - some concern from MSS that the NERC ECOWind research programme is too close to that undertaken by PrePARED. MSS will work closely with them to avoid duplication.

Presentation attached below



PrePARED project  
20220427 MFRAG-GI

**Actions**

3. JW to confirm if PrePARED receivers are compatible with tags included in smolts as part of the AST?

**4. Moray East Project**

**4.1 Moray East project update**

Eliana Mercy provided updated on Moray East:

- All construction works have been now completed, and final commissioning of the Development has been achieved on 1 April 2022
- IAC over trawl trial ongoing (post-meeting updated- trial completed on 30 April 2022)
- OFTO transfer expected to be agreed by the end of August 2022 (post meeting updates: End of August, with a transition period that is expected to extend a few more months)
- O&M works in the site ongoing, aligned to the Operation and Maintenance Programme
- Major maintenance/repair works expected for 2022

Presentation attached below



Moray East  
MFRAG.pptx

**Actions**

None

4.1 Moray East environmental monitoring update

Eliana Mercy informed that Moray East PEMP is under review, and highlighted the main changes proposed:

- Seabed Scour and Local Sediment Deposition Survey: A note detailing the monitoring proposal has been shared with MFRAG Group on email from 20 April 2022. Comments and feedbacks from MFRAG to be incorporated to final PEMP review before submission to MS-LOT. Chris Eastham asked about approach to benthic survey It was explained that where scour surveys identify significant changes in the seabed, data collected as part of the scour monitoring will be analysed in the context of benthic monitoring. Moray East have been engaging with Fugro to identify these opportunities.

**Action:** MFRAG group to send any comments to the proposed scour survey approach by 15 July 2022 (date suggested post meeting).



Email with  
proposed scour sur

- Cod and Sandeel: Methodology to follow previous pre-construction surveys. As per licence condition, a post-construction cod and sandeel survey will need to be undertaken no earlier than 12 months following the Final Commissioning of the Development. Given that the final commissioning was achieved on 1 April 2022, EMA has raised a question if there would be any advantage on undertaking this survey during Feb-March 2023, instead of Feb-March 2024. It was agreed that this should be Feb-March 2024, in line with the licence condition.
- Marine Mammals: To be updated in line with ongoing discussions on the MFRAG-MM
- Ornithology: To be updated in line with ongoing discussions on the MFRAG-O

Ongoing monitoring activities

- Marine Mammals: Marine Mammal Monitoring Programme (MMMP) ongoing.
- Ornithology: Post-construction aerial survey to start in May.

Presentation attached above.

**Actions**

4. MFRAG group to send any comments to the proposed scour survey approach by 22 July 2022 (date suggested post meeting)

## 4. Moray West Project

### 4.1 Moray West project update

Nuria Abad provided updated on Moray West and expected chronogram for next activities:

- Determination from Scottish Ministers received for S36 Variation Application
- Pre-construction site investigations due to commence June 2022
- Pre-construction Monitoring Surveys ongoing:
  - Digital Aerial surveys – commenced in March 2022
  - GBBG monitoring - commenced in April 2022
  - Marine mammal monitoring – to recommence in spring 2022
  - Benthic monitoring – assessment of geophysical data
- Offshore Consent Plans submitted:
  - Decommissioning Programme (DP) – submitted to MS-LOT on 26 November 2021
  - Environmental Management Plan (EMP) – submitted to MS-LOT on 9 February 2022
  - Project Environmental Monitoring Programme (PEMP) – submitted to MS-LOT on 29 March 2022
  - Written Scheme of Investigations (WSI/PAD) – submitted to MS-LOT on 15 March 2022
  - Fisheries Management and Mitigation Strategy (FMMS) – due to be submitted in May
  - Piling Strategy (PS) – due to be submitted in May
- Offshore Construction:
  - Commencement of OfTI construction - HDD works – expected 1 December 2022
  - Commencement of Wind Farm Construction – expected Q3 2023



Moray West  
presentation.pptx

<b>Actions</b>	None
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### 4.2 Moray West monitoring update

Nuria provided an update on pre-construction monitoring:

- Ornithology: 2022 (year 2) aerial surveys have re-commenced in March 2022, to be completed in October 2022.  
Chris Eastham asked if NatureScot are going to receive a final report for 2021 data. NO noted that they were going to send one report to cover the whole of the preconstruction period, including the DAS data analysis.
- GBBG Monitoring: Cliff top-based study has been proposed at the study sites used in 2014 and the sites previously used as a baiting trial undertaken by BOWL in 2021. Observations will concentrate

on collecting information about flight behaviour and chick provisioning (approach was agreed with MFRAG-O on 19th January 2022).

- Marine Mammals: pre-construction marine mammal monitoring at Moray West site will recommence in spring 2022, including deployment of C-POD array & broad-band recorder and analyse marine mammal digital imagery collected during digital aerials surveys in 2021 & 2022.
- Ben Wilson asked if these broadband recorders will detect Minke Whale vocalisations. NO noted that the broadband recorders will detect minke whale.
- This is text from the MMMP - WP 3 Minke whales monitoring: Soundtraps will be deployed to make broadband recordings within the Moray West site during the summer of 2021 and 2022 (Figure 3), and these will be used to explore fine-scale temporal variation in minke whale detections.
- Commercial fisheries: post-construction desk-based commercial fisheries monitoring to be undertaken in all phases of the Development. Key objectives are to collate data on landings and activity data (monthly data collated annually); and other sources of evidence on commercial fisheries activity.
- Squid fishery monitoring: Due to the limited availability of existing data on squid fisheries, two squid fishery scout surveys were undertaken by Brown and May Marine in July/August and October 2021. Moray West propose that the squid fishery scout survey is repeated in the 2022 summer squid season (during the peak period which is typically July – September), to ensure a realistic representation of the seasonal fishery is obtained.
- Socio-economics: Moray West proposal for socio-economics monitoring was presented to The Highland Council on 9 December 2021 and discussed with Marine Analytical Unit on 9 March 2022.
- Benthic communities: The benthic monitoring include review of existing (pre-consent) monitoring and review of geophysical data to identify locations of potential Annex I and PMF features (if present) to microsite turbine locations and cabling. No benthic monitoring is proposed during construction, as the pre-construction surveys will have informed micro-siting of the Development’s infrastructure to avoid sensitive / protected features if any were identified.

<b>Actions</b>	None
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## 5. BOWL Project

### 5.1 BOWL project update/ monitoring updated

Joseph Deimel (JD) provided updates for BOWL:

- An outlined survey lookahead programme for BOWL was presented.
- JD highlighted that BOWL are using unmanned surface vessels, with the benefit of reduced GHG emissions. JD explained they use echosounders, which fall within the thresholds set in the BOWL EPS licence risk assessment’ The use of USBL is being avoided where possible. It has been confirmed that no EPS licence application is required for the use of these vehicles.
- Planning application expected for the puffin camera installation.

- BOWL is working with Moray West on the GBBG and marine mammal monitoring.
- Chris Eastham asked if large scale marine growth removal is still not required on the jackets. JD noted that this is still the case, and there is an assumption that large scale removal would not be required. It is unlikely that marine growth would breach the precautionary thresholds in place.
- –It was noted that, as part of the PrePARED research programme, underwater cameras will be used to capture fish activity around turbine jackets at BOWL. Planning for this deployment is underway, and the PrePARED project management team have ongoing communications with BOWL.

**Actions**

None

**8. Next meeting and close**

Post-meeting comment:

A date for the next MFRAG-Gen call was not agreed during the call. Similar to what was suggested in 2021, it is suggested that the next call should be around October/ November. Members are required to comment on this. Moray West to send the doodle poll to agree on the date

**Actions**

5. Next MFRAG main group meeting to be scheduled around October/November 2022 (??) (to be confirmed). Moray West to send the doodle poll to agree on date.

<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	
BOWL	Beatrice Offshore Windfarm Limited
FLOWW	Fishing Liaison with Offshore Wind and Wet Renewables Group
FMS	Fisheries Management Scotland
FTRAG	Forth & Tay Regional Advisory Group
INSITE	Influence of man-made Structures In The Ecosystem
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Moray East	Moray Offshore Windfarm (East) Limited
Moray West	Moray Offshore Windfarm (West) Limited
MFRAG	Moray Firth Regional Advisory Group
MFRAG-MM	Moray Firth Regional Advisory Group – Marine Mammals Subgroup
MFRAG-O	Moray Firth Regional Advisory Group – Ornithology Subgroup
MS-LOT	Marine Scotland Licensing Operations Team
MSS	Marine Scotland Science
NS	NatureScot
ORJIP	Offshore Renewables Joint Industry Programme
OWEC	Offshore Wind Evidence and Change Programme
RAG	Regional Advisory Group
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAMS	Scottish Association for Marine Science
ScotMER	Scottish Marine Energy Research
SpORRAn	Scottish Offshore Renewables Research Framework (now ScotMER)
UoA	University of Aberdeen
WDC	Whale and Dolphin Conservation