

MORAY FIRTH RENEWABLES ADVISORY GROUP (MFRAG) MEETING MINUTES

Meeting	MFRAG Main Group	
Date	14 th December 2022 14:00 – 17:00	
Location	Microsoft TEAMS call	
Attendees	Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS)	Ben Wilson (BW) (Chair)
	Marine Scotland Science (MSS)	Jared Wilson (JW), Alexander Gilliland (AG), Kirsty Wright (KW), Emily Simmons (ES), Ross Gardner (RG), Matt Newton (MN)
	Marine Scotland - Policy	Paul Smith (PB)
	Marine Scotland Licensing and Operations Team (MS-LOT)	Gayle Holland (GH)
	NatureScot (NS)	Erica Knott (EK), Jenna Lane (JL)
	RSPB	Catherine Kelham (CK)
	Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)	Alan Wells (AW), Keith Williams (KW)
	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)	Emma Thorpe (EM)
	Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC)	Fiona Read (FR)
	University of Aberdeen	Paul Thompson (PT)
	BOWL	Joseph Deimel (JD), Heather Shaw (HS)
	Moray East	Eliana Araujo (EA)
	Moray West	Chris Newman (CN)
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From this meeting onwards, chair to summarise actions at the end of each agenda item 2. MSS to provide revised contact details for the MFRAG Main Group email distribution list. 3. JD to circulate invitation for SSE digital team puffin project presentation on 17 January 2023 [Post-meeting note: presentation delayed beyond 17 January, BOWL will issue Doodle poll to select a suitable date/time] 4. AG to feed back on eDNA from ScotMER at next MFRAG meeting 5. JW to check with ScotMER whether any data is available or research ongoing into marine growth/biofouling on structures 6. Flora Kent (MSS benthic lead) to be invited to MFRAG-GEN 7. JD to provide information on the Dunbeath puffin camera and set up a call with PT 8. Next MFRAG main group meeting to be scheduled mid-late April 2023. BOWL to send the Doodle poll to agree on date. 	

1. Introductions and Purpose of Meeting

JD proposed that the group consider potential alternative approaches to minute-taking as he noted that it can be challenging for the developer representatives to record accurate minutes whilst also being presenters and often involved in the discussions on each point, or given the technical nature of some topics under discussion. JD suggested two potential approaches for consideration:

1. Use of recording and auto-transcribing software to allow presenters to concentrate on the discussions in the meeting and refer to the transcription at a later date for editing or to prepare minutes
2. Each presenter to provide their own minutes/notes for their own agenda item and the chair to provide minutes for the start/end of the meeting, in order to allow minutes to be collated

Members discussed these approaches however it was felt that the use of auto-transcribing software would be unlikely to be efficient as it can be inaccurate and would require significant editing to be useful in preparing minutes, and the approach of asking each presenter to provide their own minutes would still require people to take minutes at the same time as presenting. It was agreed that in order to assist the minute-taker, at the end of each agenda item the chair would summarise the outcomes and actions of that agenda item, to allow accurate recording of the minutes.

Actions	1. From this meeting onwards, chair to summarise actions at the end of each agenda item
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2. Review of Minutes of Meeting from previous meeting (27th April 2022)

Status of Actions from previous meeting:

1. Members to review the updated distribution list attached in the email
 Completed. However JW asked if list can be revised given recent staff changes at MSS. **Action:** MSS to provide revised contact details for the MFRAG Main Group email distribution list before next meeting (as soon as practicable, in order to allow Doodle poll/invitation for next meeting to be sent to the correct people)
2. JD to propose date for SSE digital team puffin project presentation.
 JD proposes 17 January 2023. **Action:** JD to circulate invitation to MFRAG members [Post-meeting note: presentation delayed beyond 17 January, BOWL will issue Doodle poll to select a suitable date/time]
3. JW to confirm if PrePARED receivers are compatible with tags included in smolts as part of the AST?
 Completed. JW confirmed that yes, the tags are compatible

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

Completed. Closed as responses have been received

5. 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.

Completed. Current meeting

Actions

2. MSS to provide revised contact details for the MFRAG Main Group email distribution list.
3. JD to circulate invitation for SSE digital team puffin project presentation on 17 January 2023. [Post-meeting note: presentation delayed beyond 17 January, BOWL will issue Doodle poll to select a suitable date/time]

3. PrePARED

PT provided a high-level introduction to the PrePARED programme, with a focus on Workstream B (predator and prey in relation to offshore wind farms in the Moray Firth) including a summary of data collection work undertaken during 2022 and a forecast of work planned for 2023. Note that Sue O'Brien gave an overview of all PrePARED workstreams at the previous MFRAG General meeting on 27 April 2022, please refer to that presentation for information on the wider PrePARED programme.

Work undertaken in 2022:

- Porpoise occurrence - No significant difference between the WTG and near the WTG and between. It would be expected that a higher presence of marine mammals would be near the WTG, the reason for this variation is still being investigated.
- Fish tracking - Receivers deployed in April, fish tagging from April and ongoing
- Fisheries acoustic surveys – 3 days in June
- Fish baited video surveys

BW asked about potential shadowing effect of structures. PT: this is possible but its early days, too soon to confirm.

EM asked if it was possible that a pair of recorders could be picking up the same animal. PT: unlikely due to the distance between recorders

Work planned for 2023:

- Marine Mammals – PAM studies of responses to construction at Moray West
- No fish video survey for next year, probably on the following year. With long-term deployment.

MN confirmed again that PrePARED recorders will pick up AST (Atlantic Salmon Trust) tags. Noted that ScotMER funding has been provided for tagging of fish from rivers around Wick. Hoping to target smolts and different stages of the fish life cycle, to see if fish from those rivers pass through the PrePARED recording arrays.

EK asked about potential opportunities to use eDNA techniques. PT: it has been considered, a future campaign could possibly look at ways of collecting samples even if there is no funding stream yet to fund analysis. It was noted that other Developers have used eDNA associated with baited videos. JW added there were opportunities on that through ScotMER, and PrePARED could be a trial opportunity. This could be raised at the ScotMER stakeholder workshop in early 2023? AG offered to provide an updated on what ScotMER is doing related to eDNA. **Action:** AG to feed back on eDNA from ScotMER at next MFRAG meeting

Actions

4. AG to feed back on eDNA from ScotMER at next MFRAG meeting

4. Project and Monitoring Updates

4.1 Moray East project update

EA presented updates for Moray East:

- Moray East Offshore Wind Farm fully in O&M
- Major maintenance/repair works ongoing, started in November 2022
- Other O&M works in the site ongoing – including subsea integrity and scour surveys
- OfTI transfer expected Feb 2023
- Additional Marine Licence obtained for installation of grouted support under the cable protection systems (CPS) entering the Offshore Substation Platforms (OSPs).

Regarding Environmental Monitoring:

- PEMP under review, expected early 2023
- Seabed scour monitoring completed in 2022 as part of the asset integrity inspections. Cable burial bathymetry surveys in September and scour at selected foundations in April and October. Waiting for survey results.
- Marine Mammal Monitoring Programme (MMMP) campaign completed in 2023. Data analysis and report to follow.
- Ornithology digital aerial surveys completed in May, June and July 2022. Data analysis and report to follow.
- Next scour surveys near foundations expected in May 2023
- Consideration on the need for further benthic survey depends on analysis of scour data. Currently waiting for all data to be received.

Sandeel and Cod surveys expected for Feb/Mar 2024. Methodology previously approved for pre-construction.

Actions

None

4.2 Moray West project update

CN presented updates for Moray West:

- Key 2022 pre-construction activities have been geophysical surveys, including for UXO (ongoing)
- All PEMP activities scheduled for 2022 have been carried out, including:
 - Ornithology: Digital Aerial Surveys (2021 and 2022 surveys completed, data analysis now in progress)
 - Ornithology: GBBG monitoring (flight behaviour observations carried out in 2022 and report issued to MFRAG-O)
 - Benthic: Assessment of the pre-construction geophysical data – completed for 2021 geophysical data and on-going for 2022 geophysical data (report due Q1 2023)
 - Marine Mammals: C-POD array & broad-band recorder have been deployed at pre-selected monitoring sites between April – September 2022, as per the Moray Firth MMMP
 - Marine Mammals: Construction monitoring (MMMP WP 4 and WP 5) in discussion with MFRAG-MM
 - Commercial Fisheries and Socio-Economics: as presented in the Moray West PEMP, no reporting due yet
- Construction Programme:
 - UXO clearance expected to start December 2022/January 2023 initially nearshore around the HDD exit points, then move offshore along the export cable corridor and into the wind farm site, concluding by the end of March 2023
 - Commencement of OfTI construction January 2023 with Horizontal Direction Drills at the landfall site (export cable lay to follow from June 2023)
 - Commencement of Wind Farm construction May/June 2023 with scour protection installation
 - Works expected to continue throughout H2 2023 and most of 2024, forecasting commissioning at the end of 2024
- Consents and Licences
 - Most pre-commencement consent plans on the OfTI Marine Licence are approved, some decision notices/approval letters outstanding as at date of meeting. Most plans are common to the Wind Farm Marine Licence and therefore also approved, however Wind Farm Cable Plan currently out for consultation and Piling Strategy being split into OfTI and Wind Farm documents
 - UXO Clearance Marine Licence Application – consultation complete
 - EPS Licence for UXO clearance works – consultation complete
 - Weather buoy Marine Licence Application – consultation complete
 - Boulder Clearance Marine Licence Application – submitted to MS-LOT

Actions	None
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4.3 BOWL project update

JD presented updates for BOWL:

- End-of-warranty cable and scour surveys carried out in 2022 - surveys across much of the site. Results will be reported on in due course - comparison with previous years.
- Ongoing general maintenance work. OTM radiator repairs on behalf of the OFTO.
- Marine mammal work - thanks to Paul and Eliana for updates on that.
- Ornithology - puffin camera installed at East Caithness Cliffs (at Dunbeath, approx 20 miles south of Wick - 2018 MSc project site), ready for data collection in 2023 breeding season. Looking at joint aerial survey with Moray East and West following completion of Moray West.

JW queried status of marine growth management discussions.

JD explained that current opinion of BOWL engineering team is that removal may not be required for the foreseeable future, so haven't taken discussions further for now.

EK noted that NatureScot can reengage on discussions, when requested by developers.

PT asked if marine growth data from Jacky platform decommissioning could be useful. JD confirmed this could be very helpful, more data from sites in different locations would be very helpful in assessing likely accumulation trends.

BW/JW – could be options for research, such as through ScotMER. **Action:** JW to look into potential relationships to ScotMER initiatives.

PT asked if it would be possible to discuss the Dunbeath puffin camera with BOWL. **Action:** JD to provide information and set up a call with PT.

Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. JW to check with ScotMER whether any data is available or research ongoing into marine growth/biofouling on structures 6. Flora Kent (MSS benthic lead) to be invited to MFRAG-GEN 7. JD to provide information on the Dunbeath puffin camera and set up a call with PT
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5. AOB

GH: MS-LOT is looking into how RAG groups should be extended to incorporate the upcoming Scotwind developments. Consultation is ongoing to understand how the RAGs can improve.

EK: Next ScotMER symposium (virtual) registration is available until 2 February 2023. Link <https://hopin.com/events/5th-scotmer-symposium>

Actions	None
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8. Next meeting and close

Next meeting suggested for mid-late April 2023. BOWL to send Doodle poll to agree on date

Actions

8. Next MFRAG main group meeting to be scheduled mid-late April 2023. BOWL to send the Doodle poll to agree on date.

List of Abbreviations	
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