

# Meeting Minutes



<b>Meeting Title:</b>	FTRAG Ornithology Subgroup Meeting
<b>Date/Time/Venue:</b>	12/11/2020 / 10.00-13.00 / Virtual meeting
<b>Issue Date:</b>	
<b>Attendees:</b>	<p>Lis Royle (LR), Tamsin Watt (TW), Nick Brockie (NB), Simon Zisman (SZ, RPS), Jenny Chambers (JC, RPS) – Seagreen</p> <p>Polly Tarrant (PT), Claire Gilchrist (CG), Colin Barton (CB, Cork Ecology) - NnG</p> <p>Ben King (BK), Sarah Arthur (SA), Murray Grant (MG, RHDHV) - ICOL</p> <p>Martha Lovatt (ML), Emma Ahart (EA) – SSE (Berwick Bank/Marr Bank)</p> <p>Francis Daunt (FD), Maria Bogdanova (MB) - CEH</p> <p>Aly McCluskie (AM), Saskia Wischnewski (SW) – RSPB</p> <p>Erica Knott (EK), Glen Tyler (GT), Karen Taylor (KT) – NatureScot</p> <p>Jared Wilson (JW), Tom Evans (TE), Richard Howells (RH), Julie Miller (JM) - MSS</p> <p>Sophia Irvine (SI), Gayle Holland (GH) - MSL0T</p> <p>Sue O'Brien (SO) - JNCC</p>
<b>Additional Distribution:</b>	
<b>Minutes Produced by:</b>	RPS/Seagreen

Item	Agenda Item	Action	Due
1.0	<b>Introductions and Apologies (Chair)</b>		
	Apologies from Janelle Braithwaite MSS Gannet colour-ringing note and 2018 /2019 CEH Isle of May tracking reports distributed before meeting.		
2.0	<b>Previous meeting minutes/actions (Chair)</b>		
	<p>Actions from previous meeting –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developers to provide the FTRAG with a map of what the coverage of the aerial survey would look like if Inch Cape were to cease surveying their area after March 2020 – Not needed as full coverage completed by Seagreen and NnG.</li> <li>• Francis Daunt to provide report on the 2019 Isle of May tagging – circulated before meeting</li> <li>• Francis Daunt to circulate proposal to FTRAG for comment, FTRAG to provide comments within two weeks of receipt of the proposal – complete</li> <li>• Developers to consider the potential to include a third colony in the gannet ringing study – to be discussed in meeting – on-going, following feedback on suitability of options (Hermaness and Sule Skerry)</li> <li>• Developers to give group a window as to when they will be required to comment on the scope of collision/avoidance study. – to be discussed in meeting</li> <li>• JW to enquire within MSS as to possibilities for additional sandeel surveys to complement the proposed monitoring in the Firth of Tay - action carried forward</li> </ul> <p><b>Action:</b> JW to enquire within MSS as to possibilities for additional sandeel surveys to complement the proposed monitoring in the Firth of Tay</p>	<b>JW</b>	Next meeting

Item	Agenda Item	Action	Due
3.0	<b>Project updates (all Developers)</b>		
3.1	<p><b>Seagreen (LR)</b> Alpha and Bravo being developed together, having reached financial close early 2020. Project now a joint venture, 49% SSE and 51% Total (non controlling). SSE Renewables is leading on construction. Construction onshore started in Feb this year. Cable corridor work is commencing imminently at landfall. Manufacturing of offshore infrastructure is progressing. Wind farm area surveys are ongoing. Project team now about 100 people strong. Offshore work fully going ahead in 2021. Complete construction and final commissioning scheduled for Q3 2023.</p>		
3.2	<p><b>NNG (CG)</b> Pre-commencement works kept going despite COVID. Onshore works started last year but were paused because of COVID. They restarted in May 2020. Noise monitoring work undertaken for UXO clearance. O&amp;M port at Eyemouth gained planning permission in Sep 2020. Construction at the O&amp;M port due to commence in 2021. Looking to submit Marine Licence later this month for the pontoon at the O&amp;M port.</p> <p>Received a revised Transmission Marine Licence due to slight rerouting of export cable to avoid rocky outcrop and additional material deposits.</p> <p>Offshore construction commenced in August 2020. Key activities for remainder of 2020 and early 2021 include, pile and casing drilling, geotechnical survey, HDD works at the landfall (which started 3 weeks ago - mainly onshore) and boulder clearance works, although this has now paused until next summer.</p> <p>CG confirmed that windfarm preassembly work is being completed in Dundee.</p>		
3.3	<p><b>Inchcape (BK)</b> As announced last week Red Rock Power and ESB are now progressing Inch Cape as part of a 50:50 JV. Not committed to going down CFD route. However, if not then programme likely to be similarly aligned. Looking like work will start late 2021. Programme is very likely to change with earliest construction starting in Q2/ Q3 2022 (HDD). Major offshore work will not start until 2023 earliest.</p> <p>Points of contact within Red Rock will likely remain the same for stakeholders going forward but will be confirmed.</p>		
3.4	<p><b>Berwick Bank and Marr Bank (ML)</b> BB site is located approx. 50km from the East Lothian coastline with a capacity of around 2.3GW. The capacity for MB is still being determined but is between 900MW and 1.8GW. MB is approx. 40km to East Lothian coastline. In terms of development MB slightly behind BB. Scoping was submitted for BB in August 2020. MB Scoping is expected to be completed in Spring 2021. The application for BB is expected to be October 2021 and BB is expected to be Spring 2022.</p> <p>JW asked if the ornithology team is working on both projects. ML confirmed that RPS is the ornithology team for both BB and MB.</p>		
4.0	<b>Monitoring</b>		
	<p>PT – update. Combined approach across Forth and Tay is mainly lead by NNG and Seagreen with MB and BB looking to join the collaboration across all studies. The collaboration includes aerial surveys, GPS</p>		

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	tracking and colony monitoring, gannet adult survival study, and seabird interactions study (collision/avoidance)		
4.1	<p><b>Aerial Survey (SZ)</b></p> <p><u>Aerial update</u>  Talked through map identifying the two aerial survey boundaries – the combined ICOL, Seagreen and NNG boundary (12km buffer), and the MB and BB survey area (16km buffer). Two complete breeding seasons and 1 non- breeding season have been captured (with an interruption of one month due to COVID) for the NNG, Seagreen and ICOL area (with NnG and Seagreen collaboratively covering the survey of the ICOL area over the 2020 breeding season).</p> <p><u>Questions</u>  JW asked if all surveys are carried out by same company. SZ confirmed that HiDef are conducting the aerial surveys.</p> <p>AM asked about HiDef's new method for assessing flight height and if this will be used or explored. EA confirmed that this is something that is being looked at for MB and BB with discussions with HiDef ongoing. HiDef are preparing a paper on the flight height estimation process.</p> <p>BK asked what the rational was behind 16km buffer. EA confirmed this was inadvertently extended by HiDef from 12km to 16km but will continue at that size.</p> <p>PT noted that NnG intend to continue aerial surveys over the NnG site (plus buffer) over winter and throughout the NnG construction period.</p>		
4.2	<p><b>GPS Tracking and Colony Monitoring (FD &amp; SW)</b></p> <p><u>2020 Tracking data update (FD)</u>  The previously proposed work at Fowlsheugh and St. Abb's was not possible because of COVID.</p> <p>Tracking did take place on the Isle of May, however, with data collected from June 2020 (due to COVID). This is the 3rd consecutive year of tracking 4 species (kittiwake, guillemot, razorbill and puffin). This year the loggers used on the kittiwakes had more functionality with accelerometer and barometers to allow for determining foraging flight height and speeds. These also collected temperature and depth information. These also allow high intensity logging within defined 'fences' around the offshore wind farms. To maximise pre-construction data, data are logged in the vicinity of the turbines site boundaries, to then compare once the wind farms are operational.</p> <p>A breakdown of the number of each species tagged was provided. A smaller number of razorbills used in study as these are harder to reach – present safety issues. It was noted that 12 out of 27 tags deployed on puffins failed (explanation being sought from manufacturer) but there was a high success rate on the other three species.</p> <p>Kernel density distribution maps were shown in slides providing insight on distribution of the four species over the three years of the study (the presentation to be circulated with the FTRAG-O minutes).</p> <p><u>2020 Flight height tracking data (SW)</u></p>		

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	<p>Analysis of the 2020 flight height data collection at the Isle of May will be done by the RSPB over this coming winter. Two month's work to report by March 2021. It is a proof of concept study to assess the scope to refine flight height accuracy from tags.</p> <p><u>Questions</u>  SO asked if the same or different individuals are tagged between years. FD confirmed that there is greater power to detect change if the same individuals are used. However, due to the practical difficulties of capturing the same birds, the study comprises a mix of re-tagged and newly tagged birds each year.</p> <p>TE asked if the fence setting on loggers had included a buffer around windfarm footprints, as this would be useful to gain understanding of distances away from developments that birds are altering their behaviour. MB confirmed that a buffer was not used this year as it was a trial. However, it will be added in the future once there is a better understanding of how much data is being collected.  SW noted that a 3km buffer had been used for another study. It necessitated lower resolution data to be collected within the fence however, so there is a trade-off.</p> <p>TE noted that there is paper on tag failure looking at Mediterranean storm petrels. Paper shared in chat - (Rotger et al. 2020, <a href="https://doi.org/10.13157/arla.68.1.2021.ra1">https://doi.org/10.13157/arla.68.1.2021.ra1</a>).</p> <p>TE asked if this analysis is just being done for kittiwake at the Isle of May. SW confirmed that this study will be for kittiwake on the Isle of May, but in future RSPB will be looking separately at data from kittiwake and gannet at Flamborough.</p> <p>LR asked when this work will be finished. SW confirmed that they are aiming to finish before breeding season 2021.</p> <p><u>Future work (FD)</u>  The aim is to repeat the work that was done this year in 2021. Precise plans will depend on whether there are any device affects that come to light. Results of power analysis will be used to check if the sample sizes need to be altered, or if the fences need to be changed to balance resolution and overall coverage of data collected. Work will take place at Isle of May, St Abbs and Fowlsheugh (as part of the NnG and Seagreen monitoring plans), but potentially in tandem with the 2020-Covid postponed Bullers of Buchan/Buchaness Vattenfall BTO work, although this again depends on Covid restrictions at the time.</p> <p>SW noted that RSPB is planning that field work next year will go ahead at this point. SW also noted that there is no funding for Flamborough coasts work at present.</p> <p><u>Questions</u>  JW asked if there will be a proposal put together for the 2021 tagging and colony monitoring work. PT confirmed that previous proposal was for a 5-year program covering Isle of May, St Abbs and Fowlsheugh and suggested that if the findings from the 2020 analyses suggest a need to deviate from this plan then in March 2021 CEH would amend the original scope report that was issued to the FTRAG-O early in 2020, to cover any proposed deviations.</p>	<p>FD</p>	<p>March 21</p>

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	<p><b>Action</b> – if required CEH to issue updated plan for the tagging and colony monitoring for 2021, depending on the outcomes of the analysis of the 2020 data.</p>		
4.3	<p><b>Gannet Adult Survival Study</b>  <u>Overview and 2020 field season update (PT)</u></p> <p>In line with the previous requests from the FTRAG-O on this study the priority for 2020 was ensure that the funding was in place to continue the colour-ringing and re-sighting work of adult gannets at the Bass Rock by Keith Hamer (University of Leeds) and Grassholm by Steve Votier (Heriot-Watt University, previously University of Exeter) breeding colonies.</p> <p>Seagreen and NNG have committed to funding this work for the next five years 2020 – 2024. EA confirmed that BB and MB have also committed to contributing for the same period.</p> <p>At Bass Rock 1-week of work was completed in July. The period of access was restricted due to COVID. The week was a success with a significant number of re-sightings and a small number of birds colour-ringed, although tracking was not possible. At Grassholm access was gained in July and work completed on contract by West Coast Birdwatching. Eight day-trips (18 fieldworker days) were completed, with re-sighting numbers comparable to the annual average for last 10 years. No ringing or tracking was possible at Grassholm.</p> <p><u>Power analysis (CB)</u>  CB – Discussions are ongoing about the approach to the power analysis and will be undertaken by a Research Assistant within Steve Votier’s team this winter. Initially, the approach was to use the conventional Horswill et al. 2018 approach, to test the questions previously raised by consultees on duration and number of birds ringed and re-sighted. However it may be more appropriate to look at effect of percentage change in survival on population as explored in new paper (shared in chat)  <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marenvres.2020.105196">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marenvres.2020.105196</a></p> <p><u>Third Colony (SA)</u>  Summary of options.  Options explored so far include Hermaness or Sule Skerry. Hermaness would mean starting from scratch with no work conducted here previously and no birds currently ringed. Accessing birds in the colony would be challenging. Currently the team are speaking to local birders (Brydon Thomason and Mike Pennington) to get an idea if this is worth pursuing. It may be worth doing a pilot study first.</p> <p>At Sule Skerry 300 to 400 gannets were ringed in 2013 and 2014. No further visit is planned by the volunteer ringing group in 2021 (next is 2023) so specifically run colour ring sighting trips would need to be organised for 2021. One of the main issues is with logistics such as having to set up boat rides and no facilities available. There is no obvious other choice for the third colony. Steve Votier has looked at the Sule Skerry data already collected by the volunteer team and other than re-formatting, it is suitable for use.</p> <p><u>Questions and Discussion</u>  SW asked if the reason for adding a third colony is to have data from further north. SA confirmed the reason is to add statistical strength to</p>		

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	<p>the study. At the moment Sule Skerry has the potential to be an effective control site and could become a study site in future for ScotWind developments.</p> <p>SW suggested the Saltees (Southern Ireland) or speaking to Shiants auk ringing group who ring gannets. CB noted that the main attraction for SS is that it is situated in an area more similar to sea area to the Bass and more linked to Bass Rock.</p> <p>FD suggested Les Etacs (Aldernay) and Heligoland (Germany). SA noted that they had thought about Heligoland however there is no previous colour ringing there so would be starting from scratch. SW noted that at Heligoland there would also be the same accessibility issues with the colony using cliff faces.</p> <p>JM suggested Troup Head for consideration. CB confirmed that there would be the same accessibility problem at Troup Head.</p> <p>MG noted that it is also more important to have a second control colony (i.e. a 3rd study site) as Bass Rock is affected by offshore wind. Grassholm is a control site, but other different factors may mean difference in results therefore another control site is important.</p> <p>PT highlighted that there should also be long term management discussion as it is a long-term strategic study therefore important to discuss how it can be managed long term. PT issued a note outlining the requirements for the long term management of the project.</p> <p>EN agreed that a central body would be helpful and that there have been discussions with JNCC.</p> <p>SO noted that the challenge would be the numbers of contracts to process rather than costs, but in principle JNCC would look to take this on. NB noted Seagreen's interest to be involved.</p> <p><b>Action</b> – PT/ NB/SA to have discussions with JNCC on the long-term management and return to FTRAG-O with updates. Anyone interested in discussions should email SO after the meeting to be involved. [Post meeting update – meeting held 9<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020]</p> <p>SA asked for opinions on whether a third colony is needed. TE asked if this was something that could be looked at in power analysis and that it may not need to be a pure control - any site will add more information to the network. JW agreed the power analysis will provide insight into whether a 3rd colony is needed. It would be useful to complete the power analysis this winter to inform any fieldwork planning for 2021 season.</p> <p>SA asked if 3rd colony would need to be somewhere that already has ringing and baseline information available. EK noted that other control sites may need to start ringing, as will soon be affected by more windfarm developments, in light of Sectoral Marine Plan/ ScotWind.</p> <p>SA agreed that a second control would be useful for future windfarms SO highlighted that Grassholm may not be control site in the future due to future projects.</p>	PT/NB/SA	End Dec20

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	<p><b>Action</b> - CB to check with Steve Votier if they are able to include the requirement / value of a 3<sup>rd</sup> colony into the power analysis and if achievable feedback outcomes to FTRAG-O</p> <p>JM commented that Jana Jeglinski is working to tag immature birds in colonies around North Sea and that it may be worth speaking to her. – to provide contact details to SA.</p> <p><b>Action – JM</b> – to provide Jana Jeglinski contact details to SA</p>	<p><b>CB</b></p> <p><b>JM</b></p>	<p>Before next meeting</p> <p>End Dec20</p>
4.4	<p><b>Seabird Interactions Study – collision/avoidance (PT)</b></p> <p>This is a collaborative study based at NNG. This will be an interaction study to improve understanding of seabird behaviour and interactions with windfarms. Very close to awarding and announcing the contractor out of four – hopefully by the end of November with Ts and Cs hopefully by the end of the year.</p> <p><b>Action - PT</b> – to feedback on processes involved with the study/proposals with lessons learned etc to FTRAG-O group.</p>	<b>PT</b>	Next meeting
5.0	<p><b>ScotMER ornithology update</b></p> <p>TE - update. Publishing number of reports of commissioned studies, with more to be published over next couple of months. Link to some reports shared in teams chat - <a href="https://www.gov.scot/policies/marine-renewable-energy/science-and-research/">https://www.gov.scot/policies/marine-renewable-energy/science-and-research/</a></p> <p>The ScotMer evidence ornithology map is being updated at some point before the end of the year.</p> <p>SCOTMER symposium is to be held 1st-3rd December – link for registration shared in Teams chat- <a href="https://hopin.com/events/scotmer">https://hopin.com/events/scotmer</a></p> <p>A 2nd project leading on from the Seabird behaviour at sea study, originally by BTO, is starting now.</p> <p>Strategic review on migratory birds in tendering process. Flight heights using LIDAR – out for tender – deadline 10th Dec – <a href="https://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/search/show/search_via.aspx?ID=NOV399475">https://www.publiccontractsscotland.gov.uk/search/show/search_via.aspx?ID=NOV399475</a></p> <p><b>Action</b> – add lessons learned and ScotMER/Strategic Projects update to FTRAG-O meeting agenda</p> <p>EK suggested that as Moray Firth cluster slightly ahead of Firth and Tay, as they are now getting monitoring results through. It may be useful to start sharing info across the RAGs. For example, information on Beatrice camera studies and piling studies. AM commented that some of the Beatrice results are available online such as Power analysis report on methods and data. Link to report shared on chat – <a href="https://webarchive.nrsotland.gov.uk/20190712170226/https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00501846.pdf">https://webarchive.nrsotland.gov.uk/20190712170226/https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00501846.pdf</a> <a href="http://marine.gov.scot/data/mfrag-ornithology-moray-east-offshore-windfarm-power-analysis-pre-construction-aerial-surveys">http://marine.gov.scot/data/mfrag-ornithology-moray-east-offshore-windfarm-power-analysis-pre-construction-aerial-surveys</a></p> <p><b>Action</b> – JW to find Beatrice results and circulate with the group.</p>	<p><b>PT/NB/SA</b></p> <p><b>JW</b></p>	<p>Next meeting</p> <p>01/12/2020</p>
6.0	<b>KOWL</b>		

