

MORAY FIRTH RENEWABLES ADVISORY GROUP (MFRAG) MEETING AGENDA

Meeting	MFRAG main group	
Date	29 October 2021. 09:30 – 13:00	
Location	Microsoft TEAMS Call	
Attendees	Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS)	Ben Wilson (BW) [Chair]
	Marine Scotland Science (MSS)	Marion Harrald (MH), Ross Gardiner (RG), Kirsty Wright (KW), Jared Wilson (JW)
	NatureScot (NS)	Erica Knott (EK), Chris Eastham (CE)
	Marine Scotland Licensing and Operations Team (MS-LOT)	Gayle Holland (GH), Mark McCormack (MM)
	Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC)	Jillian Whyte (JWh)
	Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)	Alan Wells (AW), Keith Williams (KW)
	BOWL	Joseph Deimel (JD), Fiona Wilson (FW)
	Moray East	Ruaridh Danaher (RD)
	Moray West	Caterina Rei (CR), Nuria Abad Oliva (NAO)
	Transmission Investment	Bruce Turner (BT), Euan Mackenzie (EM)
	Brown & May Marine (BMM)	Alex Winrow-Giffin (AW)
Apologies	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	Catherine Kelham (CK)
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> MH to circulate an email with a summary of the strategic research proposal for data archive. TI and MFRAG secretariat to include OFTO environmental monitoring work in the 3-month lookahead (and indicative longer-term lookahead) survey timetables. RD to provide location of seabed object (detected during Moray East over-trawl) to MH to check against dive survey records for the area. JD to speak to SSE digital team about potential for a puffin project presentation to MFRAG. Moray East to set up doodle poll for next meeting (April/May 2022). MFRAG secretariat to organise MFRAG-MM meeting for early 2022 (before April/May main group meeting). 	

1. Introductions & Meeting Objectives

BW: described his role as independent chair of the (MFRAG Main) group. Group objectives include transfer of information to regulators/advisors regarding developer work programmes. Invited new group members to introduce themselves, including:
 BT: representing the Beatrice OFTO (Transmission Investment – TI). Took over the Beatrice transmission assets on 4th Aug, now asset owners of the 2 OTMs and export cables.
 EM: also representing TI.
 JW: offshore industry advisor for JNCC, representing JNCC in today’s meeting.
 MM: licensing officer at MS-LOT

2. Review actions from last meeting (April 2021)

1. JD to issue 2019 BOWL aerial survey report to group when finalised.
[Done](#)
2. JD to share 2020 substrate sampling methodology with MFRAG group.
[Done](#)
3. MHa to share research/information available on biofouling to JD and CR.
[Done – incorporated in reporting](#)
4. NAO to issue Oceanwinds project update slides with the minutes of the meeting.
[Done](#)
5. MH to circulate an email with a summary of the strategic research proposal for data archive.
[In progress – action carried over](#)
6. Next MFRAG Main group meeting to be scheduled in October/November 2021 – doodle poll to be issued.
[Done](#)

Actions	1. MH to circulate an email with a summary of the strategic research proposal for data archive.
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3. Transmission Investment LLP

3.1 Introduction from Transmission Investment (TI)

BT: Beatrice will be TI’s 8th OFTO asset. As asset owners, they will be managing all aspects of subsea cables, and OTMs. Granted a 23-year licence. Planning to undertake bathymetry surveys along the full export cable route, every 3rd year for lifetime of project, and may survey at greater frequency if required. Data to be made available to CES. For other environmental monitoring, will look to combine surveys with BOWL.
 GH: first time MFRAG has incorporated a separate OFTO.

<p>BT: new for TI, don't usually take part in groups such as these for other projects, but happy to participate. Aim is to ensure cables aren't at risk and other seafarers aren't at risk. All positioning data will be on Kingfisher database, and NtMs will be issued.</p> <p>GH: one of main purposes of group is to implement PEMP, how will OFTO requirements be passed on to TI?</p> <p>JD/BT: this has been considered. OFTO PEMP requires two ongoing monitoring strands – scour/cable burial, and marine mammals. As marine mammal work may be strategic (Moray Firth or wider geographical area) through a central funding pot, TI may seek to fulfil their requirements as part of monitoring work managed by BOWL.</p> <p>EK: advised BT to speak to EK or GH in regard to EPS licensing requirements for geophysical surveys (EPS licence may or may not be required).</p> <p>BT: OFTO marine license transitioned across to TI, does this allow surveys to take place?</p> <p>JD: the EPS license for BOWL fully covered the site (including offshore transmission assets), but at OFTO sale it was amended to cover BOWL only, as there is no legal mechanism to use it for both OFTO and BOWL combined.</p> <p>GH: legislation is different in Scotland to England, more likely to require an EPS licence for survey programmes using emitting equipment in Scotland.</p> <p>BW/GH/EK: ongoing TI membership of MFRAG main group could be useful, with TI providing updates as needed (possibly once a year, and to include next year).</p> <p>GH: could OFTO environmental monitoring work be included in the ongoing cross-developer survey timetables?</p> <p>EK: will TI be producing a Decommissioning Plan (DP) or will decommissioning of the offshore transmission assets revert to BOWL at project end?</p> <p>BT: TI issued a DP in 2020, that DP is effectively now active following financial close. DP liability will continue to rest with TI if project extends.</p>	
Actions	<p>2. TI and MFRAG secretariat to include OFTO environmental monitoring work in the 3-month lookahead (and indicative longer-term lookahead) survey timetables.</p>
4. Moray East	
4.1 Moray East project update	
<p>Project update presentation given by RD.</p> <p>RD: turbines just to be commissioned, all in situ. Final commissioning anticipated to be April 2022.</p>	
4.2 Moray East monitoring update	
<p>EK: query on over-trawl – will there be any further checks after large seabed object found during over-trawl survey?</p>	

RD: yes, Scottish Fishermens’ Federation (SFF) have requested this to be checked. It appears to be material between the cables. SFF have acknowledged this is not connected with Moray East, checks will be carried out just to confirm it’s a seabed feature.

EK: unlikely to be any navigation issues between now and next survey (when the checks will be carried out).

RD: summarised over-trawl survey results; all passes (including over rock berms) were fine, no issues encountered.

MH: used to carry out diver surveys in the area where over-trawl was conducted (due to rock / stony reef seabed features), can check the area for historical information if RD provides coordinates for the seabed object.

RD: will provide location information to MH to check, confirmed it isn’t a heavily fished area. SFF had not had reports of any issues affecting vessels at this location.

MH: sand eels pre/post construction – could a similar survey as BOWL conducted be done?

RD: yes, included in the PEMP. Post-construction survey planned for 2023, to be carried out not less than 1 year after commissioning. Same area as pre-construction will be surveyed to allow comparisons.

MH: has recently been contacted by OWEC re a potential scour research project.

Actions	3. RD to provide location of seabed object (detected during Moray East over-trawl) to MH to check against dive survey records for the area.
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5. Moray West

5.1 Moray West project update

Project update presentation given by NAO.
NAO: commencement of offshore construction planned for Q1 2023.

5.2 Moray West monitoring update

GH: how is a squid survey conducted?
NAO: a monitoring system called ‘Watchful’ observes and tracks any fishing activity in the area. Also in contact with squid Fishing Industry Representative (FIR) for information on squid fishing activity, and have also received information from Moray East construction guard vessels.

EK: socio-economics; have MW been in touch with Marine Analytical Unit (MAU)? They have tools to look into socio-economic effects.

NAO: Highland Council socio-economic discussions will commence soon.

GH: MS-LOT will be consulting with MAU regarding this, GH will send contact details to NAO.

KW: when will squid data be available? NAO will be reviewing reports, will then report back on outcomes.

BW: how are squid caught in the Moray Firth?

<p>RD/AWG: large rockhopper gear is used, that can cover a range of seabed types. 2021 squid survey had a poor catch, there has been less fishing activity than last year. Positive to now see activity resuming within the site.</p>
<p>6. BOWL</p>
<p>6.1 BOWL project update</p>
<p>JD: OFTO transfer was in August 2021. Operations and maintenance work for 2021 is coming to an end, and work being planned for spring 2022 onwards. Over-trawl surveys successfully carried out in summer 2021, with no concerns.</p>
<p>6.2 BOWL monitoring update</p>
<p>JD: subsea surveys (inter-array cables, and monitoring any seabed scour around jackets) conducted in July 2021. Analysis of 2019 and 2020 survey results against 2016 pre-construction data has been carried out by a GIS consultancy, BOWL are currently working with the consultancy to resolve model input inconsistencies. Analysis so far indicates there is minimal seabed mobility.</p> <p>JD: year 2 of post-construction benthic surveys carried out in June 2021, analysis and reporting in progress.</p> <p>CE: have there been any updates on licensing for marine growth removal?</p> <p>GH: legal review is continuing (including implications under other marine legislation), if removal is needed a licence may be required.</p> <p>JD: post-construction cod survey carried out in March 2021. Report has been issued. Similar numbers of adult cod pre and post construction. Larger numbers of juveniles pre-construction, likely due to 20mm blinder being used for pre-construction survey, whereas a 40mm blinder was used post-construction. No clear patterns found in regard to cod spawning areas.</p> <p>JD: post-construction sandeel survey carried out in December 2020 found a considerable population increase within the wind farm.</p> <p>BW: have similar increases been found at the other Moray Firth projects?</p> <p>JD: will be very interesting to see the results of the OceanWinds surveys.</p> <p>AWG/BW: may be related to regional sandeel population trends.</p> <p>JD: year 2 of post-construction aerial bird surveys carried out May – August 2021 (final survey delayed from July into August due to weather constraints on transect flights).</p> <p>JD: discussions are ongoing with MFRAG-O about the best approach for monitoring great black-backed gulls (East Caithness Cliffs breeding population).</p> <p>JD: 2021 Isle of May trial of machine-learning technology for puffin monitoring was successful, now investigating a location near Dunbeath for installing a camera for monitoring a breeding population at East Caithness Cliffs; deployment targeted for March 2022, landowner discussions in progress.</p> <p>EK: there has been good collaboration with NatureScot on the puffin project, it'd be good to keep MFRAG up to date with developments.</p> <p>JD: will speak to the technical team about a puffin project presentation for MFRAG.</p>

JD: marine mammals – ongoing discussions with MFRAG-MM about best approach for post-construction monitoring	
Actions	4. JD to speak to SSE digital team about potential for a puffin project presentation to MFRAG.
7. Strategic work updates	
<p>JW: no formal announcement of PREPARED funding yet, but expectation is that work will start in January 2022 (if funding is confirmed). Focus on seabirds/marine mammals and prey abundance distributions that drive these predator distributions. May be opportunities for additional surveys as part of this. As soon as there is a formal announcement MSS will let developers and RAG groups know. Funded by CES and BEIS/DEFRA through OWEC.</p> <p>JD: BOWL are gearing up to incorporate site access for PREPARED surveys, if required. This will be possible alongside other site activities, the more advance notice can be provided the more time the site will have to prepare timetabling.</p> <p>BW: NERC/CE research programme called ECOWIND (£7mil fund), just announced: https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/ecological-consequences-of-offshore-wind/</p> <p>GH/KW: essential fish habitats research funding. Internally funded, contracted out to a marine consultant, to collate data from various fish/shellfish data sources to produce essential fish habitat maps for Scottish waters. Call out for any data, will be passed on to consultant.</p> <p>EK: FEAST (Future Activities Sensitivity Tool); NatureScot have let contracts for birds and marine mammals, project on fish to report by the end of the financial year.</p> <p>EK: ScotMER coordination group will be meeting soon.</p> <p>KW: two contracts that have finished recently. ScotMER fish and fisheries evidence report, with recommendations for future research. Webinar for stakeholders to provide results. Another contract by Xodus, good practice guidance report/lit review on how to assess fisheries displacement. Looking to publish report. Working with CEFAS on commercial fisheries sensitivity maps, looking at potential conflicts between fisheries and offshore winds.</p> <p>MH: data archiving. Looking for a test run with a developer if possible. Interested in any obstacles with uploading data to archives.</p> <p>JD: BOWL benthic survey data (starting with pre-construction data) is in process of being uploaded to MEDIN/DASHH by the Marine Biological Association.</p> <p>BW: other RAGS, Forth & Tay – any updates from those groups?</p> <p>GH: some FTRAG meetings coming up in November. Also meeting with smaller developments such as Kincardine to discuss how they can feed into FTRAG monitoring work.</p> <p>MH/KW: working with HyWind on static fishing trials. Floating offshore windfarm off Peterhead. Looking at whether non-mobile fishing can take place (such as jigging and fish traps), within a floating wind farm. Tested out these methods (at safe areas within the wind farm that were free from cables) from the MS Alba. Jigging was successful, caught lots of haddock mid-water, little snagging risk. Fish traps less successful, may be because had deployment time of only 6 hours (24 hours or more would be better). Looking to repeat next summer with commercial boats.</p>	

8. AOB	
Nothing to add.	
9. Next meeting and close	
<p>RD: Moray East to organise next meeting (April/May 2022), will set up doodle poll.</p> <p>GH: good idea to have a meeting next spring, may then think about required frequency, as MFRAG-MM and MFRAG-O cover most topics in detail. To be discussed in spring meeting. Also be helpful to discuss how PREPARED would integrate with MFRAG main group.</p> <p>NAO: would it be good to have MFRAG MM soon?</p> <p>RD: would be good to have when strategic planning for MM monitoring is progressed.</p> <p>EK: would be beneficial to have a MM meeting before spring meeting of main group.</p>	
Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Moray East to set up doodle poll for next meeting (April/May 2022). 6. MFRAG secretariat to organise MFRAG-MM meeting for early 2022 (before April/May main group meeting).