

Teams call MFRAG interested parties; marine growth removal and monitoring

06/05/21 13:30 – 14:30

Attendees:

Gayle Holland (GH) (MS-LOT - EIA/HRA Section Head)

Laura Steel (LS) (NatureScot – Marine Benthic Advisor)

Chris Eastham (CE) (NatureScot – Marine Sustainability Advisor)

Ben Wilson (BW) (SAMS – MFRAG Chair)

Marc Hubble (MH) (APEM – Associate Director – Head of Marine Consultancy)

Ashley Cordingley (AC) (APEM – Senior Marine Ecologist)

Naveed Bhatti (NB) (SSER – Environmental Advisor)

Joe Deimel (JD) (SSER – Environmental Advisor)

Heather Shaw (HS) (SSER – Graduate Environmental Advisor)

Ruth Nicol (RN) (SSER – Asset Engineer)

Ruaridh Danaher (RD) (Moray East – Project Development Associate)

Discussion:

JD explained that marine growth removal trials are planned for WTG jacket D11 during summer 2021; would like to agree a programme for monitoring seabed effects of marine growth material deposited during this removal work, to guide future requirements (particularly in regard to licensing).

GH – not currently sure of timeline for MS-LOT marine growth removal licensing review.

GH advised that information on NNS likely to be required as part of any application for a marine licence that would allow removed marine growth material to deposit on the seabed. MS-LOT require that identification of NNS is carried out as part of marine growth monitoring.

RN – regular surveys of marine growth are carried out on a number of jackets. Although D11 hasn't been part of this programme, would it be helpful to provide information from a nearby surveyed jacket?

BW – queried efficacy of grab surveys in terms of sampling removed marine growth. If removed material comes off in clumps, may accumulate at base of jacket. Conversely, if material is in small particles will drift further away. Could material be missed by grabs?

CE – if material is deposited on seabed, useful to carry out a monitoring survey a few days after deposition, and then another 3 – 6 months later, to see if there any persisting effects. LS concurred this would be useful to do as part of the trial.

CE – ideally there would be 2 or 3 trial locations, and 2 controls (these could be from the 4 jackets that are required to be surveyed in 2021 under the original benthic monitoring programme).

MH – options for looking at NNS during benthic surveys could include high-definition ROV surveys, scrape sampling, inspection at low tide, or possibly e-DNA testing.

GH – BOWL to draw up NNS sampling proposals.

BW – what kind of material would be removed? Would this be calcareous or soft-bodied?

RN – marine growth removal contractor will be allowed to leave 10-20mm of growth on the jacket.

CE – what removal techniques are available?

RN – non-destructive tooling has been requested; likely to be cavi-blasting, or trademarked equipment such as a windmill-shaped removal device.

NB – might be useful to have an idea of what removal methods are being used, and what NNS we'd need to look for.

JD – information on volume of marine growth to be removed from jacket D11 will be provided from a survey by the contractor to be carried out before removal work. All D11 jacket faces, legs and cross-bracing will have marine growth removal.

CE – marine growth removal trial monitoring proposals could be of interest to full MFRAG-Main group membership, worth sending to full group.

BW – for marine growth removal technology, are there constraints in terms tidal stages? Would there be optimal times of day to carry out the work, how far would material be carried?

JD – due to work planning constraints and need to optimise vessel usage, it's unlikely to be practical to restrict marine growth removal to certain times of day. There may be 24-hour working.

JD – monitoring of seabed effects of marine growth removal trials will be based on suggestions from Marion Harrald (SAMS); email of 05/05/21. [broad support for this from call attendees]

GH – advised that BOWL keep the MS-LOT licensing team engaged as this develops.

Update Note (25/05/21): marine growth removal now postponed beyond 2021, however outcomes of this discussion will be helpful for planning future removal work or monitoring.