

## Forth & Tay Regional Advisory Group

### Ornithology Subgroup

Tuesday 26 January 2016, 10:30 – 15:30

Marine Scotland, Victoria Quay, Leith

**Minutes – issued as Draft on 11 March 2016.**

**Present:**

- Ian Davies (Chair) *ID* (MSS)
- Jared Wilson *JW* (MSS)
- Catriona Gall *CG* (SNH)
- Erica Knott *EK* (SNH)
- Alex Robbins *AR* (SNH)
- Sue O'Brien *SO'B* (JNCC)
- Nick Brockie *NB* (SSE – Seagreen)
- Sue King *SK* (King Consulting- Seagreen)
- Sarah Arthur *SA* (ICOL – Inch Cape)
- Murray Grant *MG* (Royal Haskoning – Inch Cape)
- Ross McGregor *RM* (Natural Power – Inch Cape)
- Ewan Walker *EW* (Mainstream – NnG)
- Colin Barton *CB* (Cork Ecology – NnG)
- Phil Bloor *PB* (Pelagica - NnG)
- Aly McCluskie *AM* (RSPB)

**Phone:**

Robert Main – *RM* (MSS), Helen Wade (MSS), Claire Crookston (MS-LOT)

**Apologies:** - none

Guest Presenters: Francis Daunt (CEH), Bob Furness (MacArthur Green), Keith Hamer (Leeds University)

**Introductions and Aims**

*ID* (Chair) welcomed everyone to the fourth Forth & Tay Regional Advisory Group – Ornithology Subgroup (FTRAG-O) meeting held at Marine Scotland's offices, Victoria Quay, Leith on 26 January 2016.

An Agenda for the meeting had been circulated to the group on 12 January 2016. There were two main elements to the meeting. The morning session was devoted to discussing three presentations given by invited speakers on the current and future seabird tagging studies being undertaken in the Forth & Tay area. Following lunch, there was discussion on the monitoring methods and further revisions to the Discussion document

## Minutes from previous meeting

The final Minutes from the previous meeting had been issued to the FTRAG-O group on 12 January 2016.

There were no corrections or amendments tabled at the meeting.

## Actions from previous meeting

The progress on the Actions from the previous meeting were reviewed.

<b><i>Actions carried over from 3/9/15</i></b>	<b><i>Response</i></b>
1) <i>RM</i> – To circulate to FTRAG-O members a list of organisations that will be invited to join SpORRAn.	<b><i>Completed</i></b>
6) <i>CB</i> – To clarify text in Discussion Document on whether species not covered by HRA also require attention.	<b><i>Completed</i></b>
8) <i>ID</i> – To contact collision detection technology companies to obtain better understanding of what methods to detect collisions are available.	<b><i>Completed</i></b>
9) <i>CB</i> – To prepare short report on existing collision detection technologies based on SOSS 2012 paper and responses from industry.	<b><i>In progress</i></b>
13) <i>CB/EW</i> – To update the <i>Key Post Consent Monitoring Questions</i> document.	<b><i>Completed</i></b>
15) <i>JW</i> – To add text to the document to explain why the dSPA is not being considered at this stage.	<b><i>On-going</i></b>
16) <i>AM</i> - to advise when colony count data from Fowlsheugh will be made available.	<b><i>On-going</i></b>
<b><i>Actions from 17/11/15</i></b>	
18. <i>SK</i> – To forward to <i>EW</i> the spread-sheet setting out parameters used in the displacement/barrier effect model (see AP10 from the previous meeting).	<i>SK</i> circulated spreadsheet on 18/11/15. <b><i>Completed</i></b>
19. <i>EW</i> – To send <i>RM</i> previously finalised meeting documents in order for them to be placed on the website.	<b><i>Completed / On-going</i></b>
20. <i>SK</i> – To contact Keith Hamer and Bob Furness and invite them to the next FTRAG-O meeting to present the work that they are undertaking on gannets at the Bass Rock.	<b><i>Completed</i></b>
21. <i>CB</i> – To update <i>Seabird Monitoring for Forth and Tay Offshore Wind Farms – Discussion Document</i> .	<i>CB</i> updated discussion document and it was circulated to the group on 12/1/16 - <b><i>Completed</i></b>
22. <i>ALL</i> – to send comments and edits on the <i>Discussion Document</i> to <i>CB/EW</i> by 30 November.	Comments and edits were received and incorporated into the discussion document - <b><i>Completed</i></b>

<b>Actions carried over from 3/9/15</b>	<b>Response</b>
23. <i>CB</i> – To expand the text clarifying what are 'Developer' and 'Strategic' questions.	CB added text to clarify to discussion document - <b>Completed</b>
24. <i>ALL</i> – All to provide comments to EW on CEH note.	Comments received - <b>Completed</b>
25. <i>EW</i> – To discuss with CEH possible attendance at next meeting.	<b>Completed</b>
26. <i>ID</i> – To talk to Simon Greenstreet and Peter Wright factors controlling sandeel distribution and report back for next meeting.	
27. <i>EW/CB/PB</i> – to prepare draft Monitoring Paper for meeting after next.	<b>Completed</b>
28. <i>JW</i> – To send link to MFRAG-O documents.	<b>Completed</b>
29. <i>EW</i> – To circulate Doodle Poll for next meeting in January.	<b>Completed</b>

## **Presentations**

The morning sessions was set aside for three presentations on seabird ringing/tagging studies being undertaken in the Firth of Forth.

**Bob Furness – Gannet ringing on the Bass Rock.** Bob Furness gave a presentation outlining the potential for assessing possible impacts on breeding gannets at the Bass Rock by undertaking a colour ringing study to monitor breeding success and adult survival at the colony. There are no recent data on the breeding success of gannets at the Bass Rock. By colour ringing the adults it is possible to measure adult survival. By undertaking a BACI type study it might be possible to detect any reduction in adult survival caused by offshore wind farms. If the results from such a study were compared with a similar study at another colony with a lower risk of an impact from offshore wind farms then any difference might be attributable to a wind farm impact. It was also suggested that a study satellite tagging juvenile gannets would help inform where they occur after fledging.

**Keith Hamer – Flight Heights of Gannets.** Keith Hamer presented the results from the recently published paper on measuring the flight heights of gannets using pressure based altitude loggers. The results from the work showed that the median foraging height of gannets commuting to and from a colony was 11.5 m and during foraging the height increased to 26.5 m. This work is on-going and a further years data have been collected and will be published this year.

**Francis Daunt – Seabird Tagging Studies on the Isle of May.** Francis Daunt presented how by tagging a variety of key seabird species breeding on the Isle of May it may be possible to assess the potential impacts from displacement and barrier effects. CEH have been ringing seabirds on the Isle of May since 1973 and have data on six species: guillemot, razorbill, puffin, kittiwake, shag and fulmar. By tagging seabirds and monitoring their nests it may be possible to measure distance travelled, mass change, energetics and breeding success. If birds are seen to be displaced it may be possible to determine whether any displacement or barrier

impacts affect the breeding birds or their breeding success. A BACI study on kittiwake, guillemot, razorbill and puffin could help address concerns.

There were questions and answers and general discussion after each presentation and FTRAG-O members very much appreciated the time and effort made by each of the presenters. The presentations were very relevant to the group and there was general agreement that there was value in the on-going and possible future studies.

### **Afternoon Session.**

EW provided the group an update of the NnG timeline. He informed the group that NnG are focussing on developing a suitable monitoring programme and to help inform them they had been meeting a number of survey companies to better understand their capabilities and also the strengths and weaknesses of the various survey methods.

All projects are currently waiting for the decision of the judicial review before making any firm commitments.

### **Post-consent Monitoring Questions**

CB presented the revised document titled *Seabird Monitoring for Forth and Tay Offshore Wind Farms – Discussion Document, January 2016* that had been circulated to the Group on 12 January 2016.

Revisions to the document were based on the discussions and issues raised at the previous meeting and subsequent emails from MS/SNH/JNCC

JW raised concerns over questions 14, 15 & 16:

*14 Does adult productivity and survival of species experiencing displacement/barrier effects vary between colonies with differing levels of connectivity to the wind farms?*

*15 Does adult survival of species experiencing collision mortality or displacement vary between colonies with differing levels of connectivity to the wind farms?*

*16 Do the population trends of species experiencing possible impacts vary between colonies with differing levels of connectivity to the windfarm?*

It was discussed whether these questions were the right questions to be answered or are there components to the questions concerning adult survival and productivity that are more relevant. If so, is it possible for individual developers to effectively collect useful data to help inform these questions or would the scale of such a study be too large for any individual developer to effectively answer.

There was further discussion on questions in Table 1 within the *Discussion Document* and CB was tasked to update the table based on the discussions.

It was agreed that question 17 – 22 should be raised at Sporrán as these might be best addressed at a broader strategic level.

The group discussed the uncertainty over the ability of survey methods to accurately measure flight heights. No single method was identified as being more or less accurate than any other and the group gave no preferences over which survey method was most suitable. There were concerns given over the ability of all the monitoring methods to accurately measure flight heights.

Following the advice from MS/SNH/JNCC issued to the developers on 3/12/15 indicating a strong preference for the use of aerial surveys to undertake future monitoring over the use of boat based surveys, there were questions on what evidence this advice was based on. MS/SNH/JNCC recognised that there were advantages and disadvantages for both methods. However, there was a preference for digital aerial surveys over boats because there would be a permanent auditable record of the sightings and that a larger area could be monitored over a relatively shorter period of time. No evidence was provided over the potential for aerial surveys to be a more accurate survey method compared to boat based surveys.

CB talked through an early draft of the potential monitoring methods currently being considered by NnG.

One of the methods currently being considered by NnG as a means to assess possible effects of displacement on breeding birds is to monitor potential effects via satellite tagging of a selection of breeding seabirds. NnG stressed that this was very much under discussion.

JW raised concerns over whether puffins could effectively be tagged without causing behavioural disturbance. CB advised that, following discussions with CEH, it was thought that with the improvement in tagging technology and size, and an improved understanding over the potential effects tagging may have on breeding puffins, that it would be useful to attempt further tagging trials of puffins .

Concerns were raised over whether all developers were expected to follow the same monitoring approach as NnG. In particular, where there were areas of uncertainty over the potential effectiveness or usefulness of monitoring. MS and SNH/JNCC expressed a preference that all monitoring should be compatible or comparable and that a consistency in approach would be preferred. However, it was also recognised by the Group that all monitoring should be evidence based and that there must be lessons learned from existing studies and previous monitoring. Consequently, any future monitoring should be adaptive and not constrained by any precedent.

**Next Meeting.** The next meeting is planned for March 2016. EW to send out a Doodle poll.

**Actions carried over**

- 9) *CB* – To prepare short report on existing collision detection technologies based on SOSS 2012 paper and responses from industry.
- 15) *JW* – To add text to the document to explain why the dSPA is not being considered at this stage.
- 16) *AM* - to advise when colony count data from Fowlsheugh will be made available.
- 19) *EW* – To send *RM* previously finalised meeting documents in order for them to be placed on the website.
- 27) *EW/CB/PB* – to prepare draft *Monitoring Paper* for meeting after next.

**Actions**

- 39. *CB* - To liaise with *JW* to agree on suitable revisions to Q 14 - 16.
- 40. *CB* - To update Table 1 of the *Seabird Monitoring for Forth and Tay Offshore Wind Farms – Discussion Document* based on discussions and views expressed at the meeting.
- 41. *JW* – To circulate presentations from the morning session.
- 42. *EW* – To circulate Doodle Poll for next meeting in March.