

Rathlin Island European Marine Site Management Group (EMS-MG)

Minutes of meeting held at Richard Branson Centre, Rathlin Island, 1 November 2013.

Present:	Mr Damian Campbell	Director, DOE Marine Division
	Mr Joe Breen	Senior Marine Conservation Officer, DOE Marine Division
	Mr Gary Burrows	DOE Marine Division
	Ms Cathy Barker	DOE Marine Division
	Mr David Quinney Mee	Rathlin Development & Community Association (RDCA)
	Mr Michael Cecil	Rathlin Development & Community Association (RDCA)
	Mr Gareth Fullerton	Senior Fisheries Officer, DARD Fisheries & Environment Division
	Mr Gordon Munro	Assistant District Officer, Maritime and Coastguard Agency
	Dr Jade Berman	Living Seas Manager, Ulster Wildlife & CNCC
	Cllr Robert McIlroy	Moyle District Council, & representing Ian Paisley Jnr, MP
	Mr John Morton	Harbour Master, Moyle District Council
	Mr Liam McFaul	RSPB Rathlin Warden

Apologies:	Mr Robin Cardwell	Lifeboat Operations Manager, RNLI
	Mrs Phil Davidson	Wildlife and Countryside Advisor, National Trust
	Mr Mark Hammond	Countryside & Coast, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
	Mr Fraser McConnell	The Crown Estate representative
	Mr Shane Mathers	Principal Planning Officer, DOE Planning & Local Government Group, Coleraine
	Mr Colin Neeson	North East Lobster Fishermen's Association
	Mr Maxime Sizaret	Chief Executive, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust (CCGHT)
	Mr James Warnock	Conservation Designations and Protection, Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
	Mr Jonathan McNee	DOE Marine Division

Agenda Action Points

1. Agree Terms of Reference for Rathlin EMS Management Group

Damian Campbell stated that the terms of reference are currently in draft form: following on from discussions at this meeting, the agreed terms of reference will be circulated to the EMS Management Group members.

The membership of the EMS-MG was discussed. It was agreed that the EMS-MG would comprise the following core members, with other members being invited to join the group as required to deliver specific objectives. DRD & Rathlin Island Ferry Ltd were not on the invitation list, but the meeting considered that they would be key members of the EMS-MG.

All core members, potential invited members and interested parties will be provided with minutes of the EMS-MG meetings, and the core members will publish the minutes of EMS-MG meetings on their websites.

Core members:

1. CCGHT
2. DARD Fisheries & Environment Division
3. Department for Regional Development (DRD)
4. DOE Marine Division (Chair and secretariat on EMS-MG)
5. Maritime and Coastguard Agency, inc. HM Coastguard
6. Moyle District Council, including Ballycastle Marina Harbour Master
7. North Coast Lobster Fishermen's Association
8. Rathlin Development & Community Association (RDCA)
9. Rathlin Island Ferry Ltd
10. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
11. Ulster Wildlife

Potential invited members, as required:

1. Commissioners of Irish Lights
2. The Crown Estate
3. Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) & Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC)
4. Irish Federation of Sea Anglers (IFSA)
5. Marine Conservation Northern Ireland
6. National Trust
7. NIEA
8. Northern Ireland Federation of Sub-Aqua Clubs (NIFSAC)
9. Northern Ireland Marine Task Force
10. World Wildlife Fund Northern Ireland (WWFNI)

Interested Parties

1. Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers' Organisation Ltd
2. Coleraine Borough Council
3. Coleraine Port
4. DOE Planning Service, Coleraine Sub Divisional Planning Office
5. Fish Producers' Organisation Ltd
6. Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland
7. Irish Whale and Dolphin Group
8. NIAPA Aquaculture Committee
9. Northern Ireland Water
10. Northern Ireland Birdwatchers Association

11. Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation Ltd
12. RNLI
13. SEAFISH
14. Ulster Farmers Union, Fish Farming Committee

Actions:

- a. DOE (Cathy Barker) will invite DRD, North Coast Lobster Fisherman's Association and Rathlin Island Ferry Ltd to join the EMS-MG as core members.
- b. DOE will draw up Terms of Reference, including aims, and issue them to EMS-MG core members.

2. Management of commercial fishing within the Rathlin EMS Management Group

DARD reported that Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) is completing a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in relation to the potential impact of fishing operations within Rathlin Island EMS. Depending on the result of this assessment, DARD will consider introducing legislation to restrict fishing operations within the EMS, e.g. by permits, limits or vessel monitoring systems (VMS). DARD estimates that the HRA will be completed in the first half of 2014.

Action: DARD Fisheries (Gareth Fullerton) will provide an update of progress at the next meeting of the EMS-MG.

3. Establishment and notification of commercial vessel anchorages

DOE reported that, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of cruise ships anchoring in Church Bay. These ship's swinging anchors have the potential to damage or destroy sensitive marine habitats such as maerl beds, especially in windy conditions. This damage could be avoided if cruise ships and other vessels moor in specific areas that have been identified as less sensitive. This would also reduce potential damage to fishing static gear.

Action: DOE (Joe Breen) and MCA (Gordon Munro) will identify the areas currently used by cruise ships.

4. Erection of signposting at Mill Bay and Rue Point to manage disturbance to seals

Although seals are not a feature of Rathlin Island EMS, they are protected from disturbance under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, and are included in the Rathlin Island Biodiversity Action Plan. DOE is aware that seals are being disturbed by tourist boats and by visitors on the shore, especially those who have dogs off the lead. Most of this disturbance results from lack of understanding. DOE would propose the erection of signage near seal haul outs at Church Bay, Mill Bay and Rue Point to inform visitors about possible seal disturbance. Signage, plasma screens and leaflets on the ferry may also be considered.

Actions:

- a. DOE (Cathy Barker) will issue the latest seal report to the EMS-MG
- b. DOE (Gary Burrows) will investigate what is required to erect signage at Church Bay, Mill Bay and Rue Point, and will consider the provision of plasma screens, information DVD and leaflets for the ferry.

5. Establish the O’Byrne Point MCZ, where potting and diving will be licensed by permit only

Damian Campbell advised that this item should be changed to “Consider the O’Byrne Point MCZ” because DOE is currently considering the establishment of Marine Conservation Areas (MCZs). Before an MCZ could be considered within the Rathlin Island EMS, DOE would need to survey the features that are present, and identify what if any conservation measures are needed to protect them. Currently, the Rathlin Island EMS features are in favourable condition. MCZ designation would also need to consider socio-economic issues.

Action: DOE (Joe Breen) will consider the need for an MCZ at O’Byrne Point and discuss it with the relevant stakeholders, including fishermen and divers, as part of the normal MCZ process.

6. Monitor condition of marine EMS features and advise EMS Management Group of required management

DOE has completed the current six-year cycle of condition assessments for all Rathlin EMS features, which report on the condition of each feature, identify problems and propose restoration measures as required. Currently, all Rathlin Island EMS features are in favourable condition, although bottom trawling has caused some damage to reef features in Church Bay. The next monitoring cycle will include back scatter monitoring to map the seabed and identify features.

Action: DOE (Cathy Barker) will issue the current marine feature condition assessments to EMS-MG core members.

7. Monitor condition of terrestrial EMS features and advise EMS Management Group of required management

NIEA have completed condition assessments for the bird species that are Rathlin EMS features, which report on the condition of each feature species, identify problems and propose restoration measures as required. Currently, all Rathlin Island EMS features are in favourable condition.

Actions:

- a. DOE (Cathy Barker) will issue the current terrestrial feature condition assessments to EMS-MG core members.
- b. DOE (Cathy Barker) will also invite NIEA to provide information on the impact of terrestrial activities on Rathlin Island EMS features.

8. Other activities: need for management

- a. **Recreational boating activities:** DOE consider that there may be a need to protect loafing seabirds on the waters around the island from fast-moving boats.

Action: On appointment, the DOE’s North Coast Marine Ranger will monitor impacts of boating on seabird populations and advice the EMS Management Group on management requirements.

9. Monitoring of EMS features and compliance with management measures

Action: DARD Fisheries and Environment Division (Gareth Fullerton) will provide updates on fisheries issues at the next meeting.

10. Any other business

- a. **Maritime archaeology:** Although this is not a Rathlin EMS feature, it is a function of DOE.

Action: DOE will appoint a maritime archaeologist to consider the need for maritime archaeology around Northern Ireland and propose the required management measures.

- b. **Maritime Festival:** This would provide an opportunity for educating the public about the importance of Rathlin Island's marine habitats and species. The next festival will be held 24 May to 1 June 2014.

- c. **Blue flag designation:** Moyle District Council are considering the designation of Rathlin and Ballycastle marinas as blue flag marinas.

Action: Moyle DC to provide update for next EMS-MG meeting

- d. **Education and work with schools:** Once appointed, this will be a role for DOE's North Coast Marine Ranger.

Action: The new North Coast Marine Ranger, once appointed by DOE, will arrange to provide talks during their dive programme to the pupils of St Mary's Primary School on Rathlin Island.

- e. **Presentation on Rathlin Island's marine features:**

Action: DOE (Joe Breen and Gary Burrows) will arrange a presentation on Rathlin Island to inform islanders about the EMS.

- f. **Information leaflet for Rathlin EMS features:**

Action: Once appointed, DOE's North Coast Marine Ranger will consider publication of a leaflet that explains the reason for designation of Rathlin Island EMS and the importance of the marine habitats and species that live on and around the island.

11. Date and location of next meeting

The next meeting of the Rathlin Island EMS-MG will be held in Ballycastle at the end of January or beginning of February 2014.

Action: Moyle District Council (John Morton) will confirm a date and venue for the next Rathlin Island EMS-MG meeting.