

Minutes of IOSEA2 Third Steering Group Meeting

Date: Thursday 5 July 2007
Time: 10:30 to 16:00 hrs
Venue: DCENR Main Conference Room, Leeson Lane, Dublin 2

Participants:

Name	Organisation	IOSEA Role
Louise Johnson	WWF	Steering Group
Koen Verbruggen	GSI	Steering Group
Fiona Fitzpatrick	MI	Steering Group
Eugene Nixon	MI	Steering Group
Fergus Cahill	IOOA	Steering Group
Eamonn Kelly	NPWS	Steering Group
Dominic Rihan	BIM	Steering Group
Helen McHenry	WDC	Steering Group
Peter Croker	DCMNR	Chairman, Steering Group
Patricia Travers	DCMNR	Rapporteur
Iain Dixon	ERT	IOSEA2 ERT Project Director
Brendan O'Connor	AquaFact	IOSEA2 AquaFact Project Manager

Apologies:

Name	Organisation	IOSEA Role
Simon Berrow	IWDG	Steering Group
Dave Wall	IWDG	Steering Group
Denis Toomey	IOOA	Steering Group
Agnes McLaverty	IOOA	Steering Group
Ronan Cosgrove	BIM	Steering Group
Rory Boyd	DCMNR	Convenor, Steering Group
Matt Dalkin	ERT	IOSEA2 ERT Project Manager
Caroline Roche	AquaFact	IOSEA2 AquaFact Project Consultant
Martin White	NUIG	Steering Group
Oliver O'Cadhla	CMRC Cork	Steering Group

Introductions and Presentations

Peter Croker, Chair of the meeting, welcomed the members of the SG again to Leeson Lane. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and will be posted on the IOSEA2 website. Mr Croker advised the members that the Department had a new Minister and a new name -DCENR- but it was envisaged that the role of the PAD would continue unchanged. Mr Croker also advised the Group that he would be briefing the new Minister on the IOSEA2 process in due course. The issue of the revision of the Licensing Terms was raised. Mr Croker advised that this is under review with the Minister.

The main part of the morning was taken up with trawling through the Draft Environmental Report and the Draft Annex which had been circulated by ERT on 29 June.

Summary of Discussion

The draft Report was discussed in detail. A list of agreed additions/amendments to the Draft Report and Annex is listed below. The report is basically complete but there are some gaps in both the main report and in the Annex, and these are usually indicated with notes or are highlighted in yellow. While the main Environment Baseline description in the Annex is almost complete, the condensed summary of this in Section 5 of the main Report is only partially ready. Likewise, there is no Non-Technical Summary or Appendix 1 prepared yet, and the conclusions and recommendations in Section 11 remain rudimentary.

PC welcomed one new item of data which had been contributed recently by GSI which was the preliminary seabed classification of the Porcupine Basin down to 500m water depth. Other seabed issues discussed were sampling of the Porcupine Bank area, available video tracks of seabed (some showing coarse sand and dropstones), strong bottom currents, iceberg ploughmarks in Connemara area, gas seepage, carbonate mounds (HERMES research programme), pockmarks, and lack of gas hydrates (Annex Figure 2.6 - too warm/shallow).

Fishing vessel sightings data has not yet been received from the Naval Service but is expected shortly. There may be an issue around confidentiality of VMS data although PC pointed out that this was not an issue during IOSEA1 (see IOSEA1 Annex, Figure 5.2). It was felt that Landings data, while still useful, was inferior to VMS data. CODA and SCANS II will provide new cetacean and seabird data for the area.

The Draft Report and Annex are due to be completed by the end of July, and so everyone's input is needed in the next week or so.

The subject of the Public Consultation was discussed in some detail. The Consultation will be for a 6 week period, from 17th August to 28th September. After some discussion it was agreed that the locations for the Public Consultation meetings were to be Dublin (17 and 18th September), Galway 19th September, Limerick 20th September and Bantry 21st September. Two weeks prior to the beginning of the Consultation Period (i.e. on 3rd August) advertisements are to be put into the national papers i.e. Irish Examiner, Irish Independent and Irish Times as well as in local and regional newspapers (Western People, Connaught Tribune (county version), Galway Advertiser, Clare Champion, The Kerryman). Also mentioned were the Irish Skipper, Marine Times, Inshore Ireland (Irish Farmer's Journal) and RTE's Seascapes radio programme, as well as local radio stations. The notice will also be posted on the Department's website. These details to be included in section 2.2.4 of the draft Report.

There was a discussion about how the results of the Public Consultation should be handled. One possibility is to prepare a separate document showing how recommendations have been changed as a result of the Public Consultation. No decision was taken on this issue for the time being.

Current project timetable:

- Draft report completion – end July
- Public consultation period 17 August - 28 September
- Final Environmental Report and Annex completion – October 2007

Other issues

PC informed the SG about a meeting held with the Environmental Authorities on the 31st May and a meeting with the Department of the Environment on the 1st June with regard to Appropriate Assessments under the Habitats Directive (Article 6). Following the meeting with D/Env it was decided to commission an Appropriate Assessment over the two SACs in the Porcupine Basin. This will be carried out by ERT in parallel with the main study.

PC presented the cuttings volumes figures from both the top hole (to seafloor) and cased hole (to drill floor) sections for all 32 wells in the Porcupine Basin area. Average volume/well is 159 cu m top hole and 231 cu m for cased hole. These figures had already been incorporated by ERT into Table 8.2 of the draft Report. PAD had also been asked to provide data on volumes of mud used and discharged when drilling Porcupine wells and this was now in preparation.

In response to a query re the NPWS Guidelines for Mitigating measures for the protection of marine mammals during acoustic surveys, PC said that PAD have been implementing the December 2006 NPWS Guidelines for all seismic surveys since 1st January 2007.

DR said that BIM had participated in an ICES/FAO review of fishing technology and fish behaviour (WGFTFB) and that the section on interactions between fishing gear and cuttings piles and over-trawlable objects in the North Sea should be of interest to the SG.

Next meeting

Thursday 2nd August 2007 at 10.30 am in Leeson Lane.

Patricia Travers and Peter Croker

27th July 2007

List of agreed additions/amendments to the Draft Report and Annex

1. The PAD logo to be removed and replaced by harp and Department name on both documents
2. Report Section 1.3.2 to be updated wrt Energy White Paper and IEA country review (2007)
3. Report Figure 2.1 needs to be modified (EN)
4. Report Section 2.2.4 to be updated
5. Report Section 5 – to be completed
6. Report Section 5.1.2 - GSI seabed classification map to be included
7. Report Table 5.1 – negative values to be checked
8. Report Table 8.2 – PAD to provide mud volumes
9. Fishing vessel sighting (VMS) data from Naval Service to be added
10. Report Section 11 (Recommendations) needs significant work
11. Report Section 15 – SG membership to be updated
12. Report Appendix 1 – to be added
13. Annex Figure 2.3 caption to refer also to PAD bathymetry data (after GSI)
14. Annex Section 2.2.3 – add reference to HERMES research programme
15. Annex Table 2.3 - negative values to be checked out.
16. Annex Section 3.4.2 - GSI seabed classification map to be included
17. Cetacean data (Annex Tables 3.7, 3.8) to be presented in map form
18. PC to provide digital copy of Games 2001 paper on ploughmarks to ERT
19. Section on interaction between fishing gear and cuttings piles in the North Sea to be added (DR)
20. Non-technical summary to be completed
21. EN comments on hard copy to be incorporated