

Stakeholder workshop notes 2013 – 2015

Offshore MPA workshop

17 and 18 March 2015

Attendees:

Marine Scotland: **[redacted]**

JNCC: **[redacted]**

Industry: **[redacted]**

NGOs : **[redacted]**

Academic: **[redacted]**

Aims of the workshop

1. The purpose of the workshop was discuss and come to a consensus on potential management proposals by the end of the workshop. It is expected that on-going discussions will be needed for some areas.
2. All measures should be practical, proportionate and non-discriminatory.
3. To promote discussions two documents for each site were produced: a Fisheries Management Options Paper and JNCC feedback on proposed fisheries restriction zones.
4. They are based on a risk based approach to advice and focus on the ability to achieve the conservation objectives (CO).

West Shetland Shelf MPA

Protected features:

1. Offshore subtidal sands and gravels

Sensitivity: Offshore subtidal sands and gravels are sensitive to mobile bottom contact gear.

Existing Management: Some mobile gear fisheries (with derogations) are currently restricted across the whole MPA under the CFP “Windsack” regulations to assist in the recovery of cod stocks.

Proposed management: Eastern half of the MPA closed to all mobile demersal gear.

JNCC Advice: The proposed measures would reduce but not eliminate the risk of adverse effects for offshore subtidal sands and gravels. Would advise the use of adaptive management to monitor the impacts and ensure the achievement of the CO, especially if the intensity of static gear were to increase.

Discussion:

1. The site is fairly uniform ecologically and the eastern half of the site was chosen for closure to mobile demersal gears because this side is of highest

value for the current static gear use. Impacts on the mobile fishing industry were not taken into account due to the area being closed.

2. Concern over the proposed management as it restricts the potential to fish there in the future. Historically the area was one of the best for mature cod , consequently there was a preference from industry for a smaller are to be closed.
3. Due to the area being closed for 12 years knowledge of the mobile demersal fishing activity within the area is limited. A workshop with those who have historical knowledge of fishing the area will be organised to propose the best areas to close.
4. It was agreed that 50% of the site should remain closed to mobile demersal gear but that the location of the zone(s) would be determined following additional research into historical fishing tracks.

West Shetland Shelf NCMPA Fisheries Management Meeting

Inverdee House, Aberdeen, 28th August 2015

Attendees:

Marine Scotland: **[redacted]**

Joint Nature Conservation Committee: **[redacted]**

Industry: **[redacted]**

Aims of the meeting:

To discuss Marine Scotland's proposed management measures for West Shetland Shelf NCMPA and develop alternative options where appropriate.

Introduction and summary of discussions to date:

- **[Redacted]** (Marine Scotland) provided an introduction to the meeting, including recognition that the site is already covered by the Windssock area. The Windssock closure only covers certain gears and it is also not known how long it will be in place for. Therefore it is useful to discuss management measures in order to future-proof the site in the event that the Windssock restriction is lifted.
- JNCC provided a brief overview of the site features and survey data. The West Shetland Shelf NCMPA is designated for one feature – offshore subtidal sands and gravels. Data to support the site's designation came from a targeted survey in 2011, opportunistic sampling during a further survey in 2011, and also from analysis of Infaunal samples collected during a 1996 DTI SEA survey. These surveys provided clusters of data points confirming the presence of offshore circalittoral coarse sediment and sand biotopes. This survey data supports the distribution of offshore subtidal sands and gravels predicted to occur across the entire MPA by the EUSeaMap project habitat model maps.
- Due to the information available on distribution of the feature across the site, JNCC do not have an ecological basis upon which to inform the location of fisheries restriction zones. Therefore it will be more useful to ensure that the zones cover a representative proportion of the site e.g. Marine Scotland's proposal, but are in areas agreed by different sectors of industry.
- Marine Scotland's original proposal (presented at a NCMPA workshop in March 2015) was for a restriction on mobile demersal gears across approximately 50% of the site. The proposed restriction (covering the eastern half of the site) was based on areas which are currently of highest value to static gear fisheries; however this sector was not represented at the workshop in March. Therefore it was agreed that further discussions with industry were needed to establish which portion(s) of the site should be included within restrictions.

- A summary of the Fisheries Options Paper for the site was provided. As with all the NCMPAs, three broad options were provided and the paper outlined the level of risk associated with these. Marine Scotland have indicated that a zoned approach (option 2) will be taken with this site.
 - Option 1: No additional management – JNCC suggested that, as the Windsock regulations do not apply to all demersal gears, there would be a risk of not achieving the conservation objectives.
 - **Option 2: Reduce/limit pressures** – JNCC suggested that this option would reduce, but not entirely eliminate the risk of not achieving the conservation objectives.
 - Option 3: Remove/avoid pressures – JNCC suggested that this option would reduce the risk of not achieving the conservation objectives to the lowest possible level.

[Redacted – out of scope]

Summary of discussions and action points:

- It was suggested by an industry attendee that gridded VMS layers may not provide an accurate representation of static gear activity (crabbing) within the site. Marine Scotland noted that they have used other methods to assess static gear activity within the site, including VMS ping data, and linking VMS data to catch data to work out values for logged effort. Therefore it is possible to view the activities data in different ways.
- There was a general feeling from attendees that a simple “line down the middle” approach is too coarse, and that activities data needs to be studied in greater detail in order to draft a more suitable proposal.
- It was reiterated that industry hope that the Windsock restrictions will be lifted, allowing access to previous tows even on a seasonal basis. Marine Scotland noted that this is a European Union issue and therefore it is not known if/when the restriction may be lifted, however the MPA is a different issue.
- It was noted that a seasonal closure for the NCMPA is not something that has been previously considered. However JNCC noted that this option would possibly pose a higher risk to achievement of the conservation objectives than a year round restriction.
- A question was raised r.e. whether the restriction has to be a 50:50 split down the middle of the site, or whether there can be a number of zones which add up to 50%. Marine Scotland clarified that this would be acceptable.
- It was argued that a 50% restriction to mobile demersal gears may not be necessary as there is little direct evidence of damage by these gears within the site. JNCC recognised the lack of direct evidence but that their advice is based on evidence of impacts of mobile demersal gears on these this type of habitat in

other areas. The only way to gather direct evidence of the impact of gears within the site itself would be to monitor any change as a result of management measures.

- It was also suggested that the site may not be as uniform as the survey data/habitat mapping suggest. JNCC noted that there is not a huge amount of survey data for the site and that any information that industry can provide would be of great use in refining our understanding of the habitat present. It was asked whether a map of the grounds within the site could be provided to JNCC.
 - **Action 1:** [Redacted] to provide a map of grounds to [Redacted], if possible.
- Attendees from the whitefish sector were asked to indicate (using the on screen map provided by JNCC) where their most valuable tows were located prior to the introduction of the Windsock closure, and therefore which areas they would like to remain open. A number of important tows were highlighted, however it was pointed out that there would be very different suggestions from different people within the same sectors, as well as between sectors, as to which areas they would like to keep open to demersal trawling. Suggestions drawn at the meeting are shown in Annex 1.
- It was suggested that a map of the site is sent out (including lat and long) to allow interested parties to draw their key areas. Submissions can then be compared to decide a way forward. It was suggested that there could be some flexibility to the 50% figure for the restriction zone(s).
 - **Action 2:** JNCC to circulate a simple map of the site.
 - **Action 3 :** Industry attendees to input suggestions (those drawn at the meeting to be included on the map) and seek input from others. Suggestions can be submitted electronically or on paper. Deadline of 3 weeks from date sent out. Input to be co-ordinated by the industry associations.
- There are currently on restrictions on scallop dredging within the site. It was noted that dredging has been attempted within the site but with no success and therefore there is no current activity by this gear type.
- An attendee queried why the MPA doesn't match the exact boundaries of the Windsock area closure. JNCC suggested that the areas of the Windsock omitted from the MPA boundary were likely excluded on the basis of habitat type, however this is something that can be checked.
 - **Action 4:** JNCC to check basis of exclusion of these areas of the windsock.
- The attendee also noted that the western end of the northern boundary of the site is of importance to both the whitefish and static sectors, while the area south of the site boundary (within 12nm of Rona) was noted to be of less value. The

attendee asked whether the MPA boundary could be shifted south to reflect this. JNCC suggested that (without having looked into it further) there is probably no ecological reason why this couldn't be the case, however this would be a legal issue. Marine Scotland agreed that this would work in theory but would set a precedent. There is a network review due in 2018 but any review of this site would be dependent on whether the Windsock is still in place and whether any changes made ecological sense.

- **Action 5:** JNCC to look into location of the MPA and why inside 12nm was not included. JNCC will circulate site documentation which should clarify this.
- It was queried whether it is necessary to put forward a proposal for the West Shetland Shelf NCMPA at this time, given that the Windsock is currently in place. It was suggested that a restriction on scallop dredging across the site could be proposed for now, which would allow further discussion on trawling restrictions. Marine Scotland noted that proposals still need to be discussed and built on even if these are submitted yet, in order to avoid sudden conflict if the Windsock does open.
 - **Action 6:** Marine Scotland to consider whether a proposal mobile demersal gears for West Shetland Shelf needs to be put forward at this time.
- It was noted that a proposal for a restriction on dredging across the site would require justification of why this gear would be not be treated the same way as other towed gears.

Summary of actions:

1: [Redacted] to provide a map of grounds to [Redacted], if possible, to further understanding of habitats present.

2: JNCC to circulate a simple map of the site.

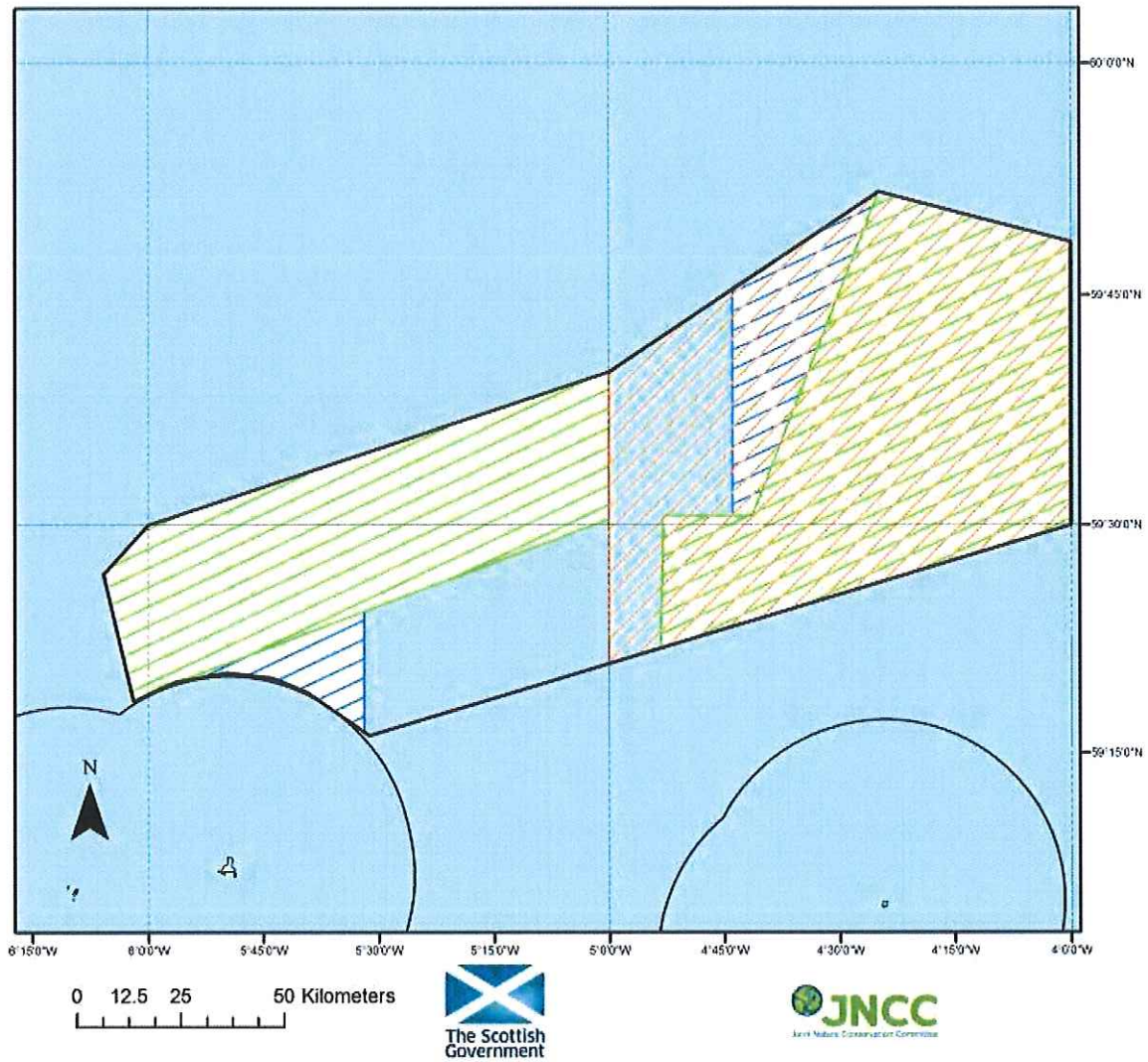
3: Fishing Associations to co-ordinate input from skippers (those drawn at the meeting to be circulated for reference) and seek input from others. Suggestions can be submitted electronically or on paper. Deadline of 3 weeks from date sent out.

4: JNCC to check basis of exclusion of these areas of the windsock.

5: JNCC to look into location of the MPA and why inside 12nm was not included. JNCC will circulate site documentation which should clarify this.

6: Marine Scotland to consider whether a proposal mobile demersal gears for West Shetland Shelf needs to be put forward at this time.

Annex 1



Map displayed in geographic coordinates WGS84 meridian projection. This product has been derived in part from material obtained from the UK Hydrographic Office with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and UK Hydrographic Office (www.ukho.gov.uk). NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION. The exact limits of the UK Continental Shelf are set out in orders made under section 1(1) of the Continental Shelf Act 1964 (© Crown Copyright) Landmass Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and database right 2011. All rights reserved.

- UK 12NM limit
- UK continental shelf
- ▭ West Shetland Shelf MPA
- ▭ ICESRectangles
- Mobile Demersal Gear Restriction options**
- ▨ Option 1 - Marine Scotland March 2015
- ▨ Option 2 - [Redacted] August 2015
- ▨ Option 3 - [Redacted] August 2015

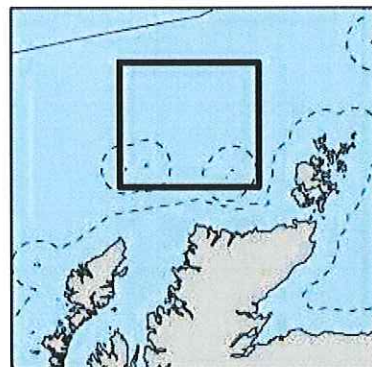


Figure 1. All management options discussed at the meeting