

1st meeting of the Seaweed Review Steering Group on 16 May 2019, Discovery Point, Dundee.

Note of the meeting

1. Welcome and Introductions

Helena Gray, deputy director of Marine Scotland Marine Planning, Policy and Licensing Chaired the meeting. Apologies were received from Richard Rollison, co-chair and deputy director of Scottish Government Manufacturing and Industries division (deputised by Elizabeth Stark). Shona Turnbull, Local Authority Planners was unable to participate due to technical issues in the room.

A list of attendees is attached at Annex A.

2. Scene setting

The Chair provided context to the origins of the review and establishment of the steering group. The main points are summarised below:

- During Scottish Parliament's consideration of the Scottish Crown Estate Act the Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform committed to a review to gather evidence on the environmental implications of removal of kelp by any method and consider the sustainable development of the seaweed sector.
- A steering group of key stakeholders would be established to advise on all aspects of the review. Attendees were thanked for agreeing to participate.
- There has been and continues to be parliamentary, public and media interest around kelp and the seaweed review.
- The National Marine Plan adopts sustainable development as its guiding principle and application of its policies ensure that consented development or activity can be regarded as sustainable.
- The remit of this group is to steer. The steering group will inform and advise to help ensure the review reflects the views of stakeholders and shares information, knowledge and expertise relevant to the review. It is not a decision making group.
- We are committed to regular reporting of progress. The aim of this first meeting is to agree scope, Terms of Reference and share initial thoughts on a forward work programme, along with an agreed mechanism of reporting progress - through an agreed communications strategy.

3. Review Scope (Paper 1)

Paper 1 was circulated in advance of the meeting. During discussion, the group broadly agreed the proposed scope, subject to further clarifications and amendments. The main points were:

- The review should consider all seaweed not just kelp. and include cultivated seaweed as well as wild harvested.
- The review should be framed in the context of the global climate emergency noting the role kelp in particular plays in terms of coastal protection, supporting biodiversity, providing habitat and storing carbon.
- The review of the licensing regime should include how environmental assessments, stakeholder consultation and community engagement apply to any of the harvest methods identified.

- Studies and assessments should include consideration of ecosystem services / natural capital provided by seaweed generally and kelp forest specifically. Socio-economic studies should include displacement of other sectors.
- The remit of this review is not to gather evidence to reverse the kelp amendments in the Scottish Crown Estate Act. Any recommendations for further policy action that arise out of the review will be subject to the usual policy and parliamentary processes including the respective consultations and various assessments that inform these.

Action – Secretariat to amend and recirculate paper 1 for agreement.

4. Membership, Function and Terms of Reference (Paper 2)

Paper 2 was circulated in advance of the meeting. During discussion, the group broadly agreed the proposed document, subject to further clarifications and amendments. The main points were:

- The remit of this group is to steer. It is not a decision making group. The steering group will inform and advise, to help ensure the review reflects the views of stakeholders, and share information, knowledge and expertise relevant to the review.
- Given interest in the review it is important that the process is transparent and progress is reported regularly, clearly and quickly.
- The steering group should agree how progress will be communicated and publicly reported, both to their members and wider stakeholders as appropriate.
- The group should consider expanding the membership to include Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and consider how to ensure community groups and seaweed harvesters views are represented.
- Members were reminded that they are there as representative bodies to represent their wider membership.
- Meetings should initially be every 3-4 months. Papers should be circulated to members at least one week in advance of a steering group meeting.
- Location of meetings can be flexible but venue should be central and near to a train station and have teleconferencing / video conferencing capability.
- A note of each meeting summarising key points and agreed actions will be drafted by the secretariat and circulated around the group (in confidence) within 10 working days for comment. Once agreed, the note should be made publicly available as soon as possible.
- Actions arising should be progressed, and draft papers and notes of meetings agreed and cleared timeously and well before the next meeting.
- A Communications Strategy, agreed and followed by the whole group is crucial. This should include:
 - Agreed initial key messages following each meeting to ensure consistency. Once agreed, those messages can be disseminated to interested parties;
 - Agreed notes of meetings and progress against deliverables to be made publicly available;
 - Marine Scotland to consider a central portal where progress is publicly reported and enquiries can be directed to – initially on an appropriate page of the marine Scotland web site.
- Deliverables should be based on the aims set out in the scope document, agreed and set out in an action plan with realistic timeframes.

Action – Secretariat to amend and recirculate paper 2 for agreement.

Action – Secretariat to invite SEPA to join the steering group

Action – All members to consider if any organisation, group or sector is missing from the steering group

Action – Once agreed by all, Secretariat to make note of meeting publicly available.

Action – Secretariat to consider a central portal where progress is publicly reported and enquiries can be directed to.

5. Suggested initial work areas

a. Review of seaweed activity and regulation (Paper 3) was circulated in advance of the meeting. This proposed work stream will look to establish a greater understanding of activity across Scotland by mapping what, where and how much wild harvesting and cultivation is happening or planned and by whom. It will also look to determine the extent to which the licensing regime including environmental assessments, socio-economic considerations and stakeholder consultation and early community engagement may apply to some or all of the methods identified and consider whether legislative or policy amendments to the current framework are advisable. It will also identify what guidance may be required on the different activities and licensing requirements to give clarity to stakeholders, regulators and industry. During discussion, the group were broadly in agreement subject to small amendments and clarifications. The main points were:

- The activity mapping exercise should cover all species, all types of harvesting and should include cultivated seaweed.
- There is no central list of information on what activity is happening, where, how frequently and what the necessary permissions, regulatory and environmental assessment requirements are.
- In considering the implications of harvesting activity there is a need to consider the cumulative effects of multiple foraging and hand gathering
- The SEA consultation generated a lot of useful information and should be used to inform this work stream.

Action – Secretariat to amend and recirculate paper 3 for agreement.

b. Scenario mapping (Paper 4) was circulated in advance of the meeting. This draft discussion paper was tabled to seek initial thoughts from the group on how to ensure that research is grounded in the realities of where the sector may go. To enable prioritisation in other aspects of the review (namely understanding the environmental implications) the aim of this piece of work is to understand the key areas of growth potential for the seaweed sector and the wider economic and social impacts of possible growth scenarios. This work stream was generally viewed as key in directing future research. Main points raised were:

- Agreement that, to inform wider research needs on the environmental and socio economic implications of seaweed harvesting and cultivation, there is a need to

consider the current and future growth opportunities for the sector. This will enable prioritisation of scientific evidence gathering.

- Members flagged up a lot of research and studies have already been conducted on seaweed, particularly cultivated and should be used to inform future work. The 2018 HIE commissioned report by SAMS was mentioned specifically.

Action – Secretariat to amend and recirculate paper 4 for comment.

c. Research requirements (Paper 5) was circulated in advance of the meeting. This paper was drafted as a discussion document to seek initial thoughts on the type and scale of research and evidence-base required to identify and assess the potential environmental impacts of seaweed harvesting.

The main points raised were:

- The potential scale, time and cost of conducting field trials was highlighted. Therefore research must be prioritised and targeted.
- It was clear from the earlier discussion that the scenario-mapping exercise would be important in indicating which species and methods of harvest / cultivation industry will be interested in. There was general agreement that it was not worthwhile conducting comprehensive trials into species that may not be commercially viable.
- It was commented that, given the Scottish Crown Estate Act *defacto* ban on *Laminaria hyperborea* the focus should be on other species.
- There was general agreement that research should be staged. Scenario mapping and socio-economic studies would identify or could rule out certain species and activities. This would be followed by focused desk studies to review scientific literature and available information and to make recommendations on research requirements. This would include assessing the impact of activity, for example, mechanical harvesting on stock recovery, wider ecosystem services and biodiversity and habitat recovery.
- A pilot study should only progress once all desk studies and any supplementary investigations such as expert advice and supporting modelling work have been carried out. This would identify the likely commercial practise under scrutiny and the seaweed species of most commercial interest.
- It was agreed that the initial discussion document (paper 5) along with paper 4 would be revised to reflect initial comments and recirculated to the group for further comment along with bilateral discussions to further tease out / understand specific issues.
- It was commented that any pilot study would require all the necessary permissions and licenses. This would include, if a marine licence was required, going through the full public consultation.

Action – Secretariat to amend and recirculate paper 5 for comment.

6. Member organisation current or planned research /activity

7. Agreement of initial work programme / workstreams

These agenda items were taken together but with limited further discussion given the overlap with previous discussions and agreed actions at 5. Comments included:

- SAMS have conducted a lot of research, particularly on cultivated seaweed and that that this review should be informed by that work.

- It was suggested that SAMS should be invited to join the steering group. It was clarified that MASTS are on the group to act as an umbrella body for all relevant Scottish marine research organisations - including SAMS. This ensures impartiality and avoids potential conflict of interest if, for example, SAMS or any other MASTS member were to bid for any research work commissioned through the review.
- It was generally commented that early clarity is needed on what the review is going to deliver and by when. It was also noted that this is a contentious issue and while everyone wants quick answers there needs to be a balance between that and getting it right. There also needs to be collective ownership of the process and consensus.
- Proposed deliverables with realistic timeframes should be set out in a draft action plan and agreed at the next meeting in September.

Action – Secretariat to circulate draft action plan with milestones to the group well in advance of the next meeting.

8. Communication strategy / Public reporting

This agenda item was broadly covered at 4. The main points being:

- There is a lot of interest in the review. The process must be transparent and reporting must be regular, clear and timely.
- A communications strategy is essential. The steering group should agree the strategy including how progress will be communicated and publicly reported.
- Everyone on the group has a responsibility to ensure messaging from the group is clear and accurate.
- The process must include a mechanism to allow the wider stakeholder community to be engaged and inform the process.
- Communications should be a standing agenda item.
- A note of each meeting summarising key points and agreed actions should be drafted and circulated around the group quickly; and subsequently cleared quickly to allow members to update their organisational interests. Once agreed, the note should be made publicly available.
- The steering group should agree its key messages following each meeting to ensure consistent early dissemination to their members during the interim period before the note of the meeting has been published.
- There should be a central portal where progress is publicly reported and enquiries can be directed to.

Action – Secretariat to circulate proposed holding lines with the draft note of the meeting.

Action – Members to agree and deploy holding lines as appropriate.

Action – Members to provide comments / suggested amendments on draft note and revised papers.

Action – once agreed, secretariat to publish note and papers.

Action – Communications to be added to future agendas as a standing item.

9. AOB / Date of next meeting

- The next meeting will be in September. Suggested locations included, Glasgow, Stirling, Edinburgh, Perth, Oban, Inverness and Dundee.

Action – Secretariat to canvass members in June for availability and preferences of location to get dates in diaries.

ANNEX A

Membership

Helena Gray	Marine Scotland, Marine Planning, Policy & Licensing Co-Chair
Richard Rollison	Scottish Government, Manufacturing and Industries Co-Chair
Calum Duncan	Scottish Environment Link
Tracey Begg	Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
Mark James	Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland (MASTS)
Alex Adrian	Crown Estate Scotland, IM
Colin Palmer	Crown Estate Scotland, IM
Roger Kilburn	Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre (IBioIC)
James Cameron	Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE)
Shona Turnbull	Local Authority Planners
Alastair McNeill	Inshore Fisheries Group, West
Elaine Whyte	Communities inshore fisheries alliance (CIFA)
Malcolm Morrison	Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF)
Walter Speirs	Scottish Seaweed Industry Association (wild and cultivation interests)
Sally Campbell	Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation

Marine Scotland / Scottish Government

Malcolm Rose	MS Licensing
Paul Haddon	MS Marine Planning
David Pratt	MS Marine Planning
Phil Boulcott	MS Science
Diane Buchanan	MS Fisheries
Cornilius Chikwama	MS Analytical Unit
Adam Cox	MS Marine Planning (secretariat)