



Marine Natural Capital Navigators: Meeting Minutes

8th July 2024, 10:00-11:00

Chairing Organisation: SWT, Chair: Jessica Jones

Agenda:

Item	Lead
1. Defra Overview of mNCEA programme	Emily Hawkes, Defra
2. Enabling markets for marine natural capital – FIRNS project	Simone Martino
3. Planning for blue carbon webinar agenda – identifying speakers, confirming format/timing/invitation list	Jess Jones
4. AOB	All

Actions from previous meeting:

Action	Lead	Status
1. Contact marine directorate NMP2 team - organise discussion on how the group can support the development of NMP2 (underpinned by blue economy vision) and what natural capital approaches may apply to this workstream.	SS	On hold. RD to contact Navigators at appropriate time in NMP2 development when this would be most useful.
2. Check if possible to share community benefits report from FMS.	CT	Ongoing
3. Lessons learned session from FIRNS to encourage collaborative working between hubs.	JC	Completed – Simone Martino invited to present
4. Distill opportunities for hub collaboration and discussion from NatureScot 2023 source to sea report	CL	Summary document completed, will be shared with group for feedback.
5. Share JNCC asset matrix tool webinar on Basecamp.	SS	Not possible to share webinar on Basecamp. Alternatively, have arranged for JNCC to speak at future meeting on ASM.

Ongoing from previous meetings:

6. Organising blue carbon webinar with Scottish Blue Carbon Forum (late autumn)	JJ, SS, CL	Ongoing
7. Potential presentation on mNCEA (DEFRA) for next meeting	VM/Emily Hawkes	Completed

Attendees:

Chris Leakey (NatureScot)
Emily Hawkes (Defra)
Hannah Rudman (Highlands Rewilding)
James Merchant (Marine Conservation Society)
Janet Khan (SEPA)

Jessica Jones (SWT)
Julia Clough (SWT)
Rebecca Crawford (SWT)
Sam Collin (Howell Marine Consulting)
Simone Martino (JHI)
Sinead Sheridan (NatureScot)

Apologies:

Marion Harrald (SEPA)
Cathy Tilbrook (NatureScot)
Sarah Marley (SRUC)
Phil Boulcott (Marine Directorate)
Vicky Morgan (JNCC)

Item 1: Overview of Marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme, Emily Hawkes Defra

Emily Hawkes (EH) attended the meeting to provide an overview of the Defra marine Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment programme (mNCEA) programme. The presentation is summarised below.

- There are different ways of considering natural capital approaches, but the mNCEA accepts the definition of natural capital approaches as a way to help us describe environmental, social, and economic value of natural capital. Overall objective is to improve incorporating or embedding this into decision-making.
- As well as the marine programme, there is also a terrestrial programme. The mNCEA is a three-year programme, running to March 2025; it is currently in its last year. The overall budget is £140 million with £47 million going to mNCEA. It is a partnership programme, led by Defra band delivered by arms-length bodies and in some limited cases partnership with private sector organisations.
- The overall Vision is for: A thriving marine environment where nature is at the heart of decision making.
- The programme is delivering projects to fill critical evidence gaps to better understand the state of our inshore and offshore species and habitats, and the benefits they provide. Projects are also testing new ways to monitor natural capital, through citizen science, autonomous vessels, remote sensing; this is in addition to business-as-usual monitoring approaches. Outcomes and learnings will help transform future marine monitoring.
- Some approaches being used and tested include natural capital accounts, ecosystem service maps, logic chains, economic methodologies (e.g. willingness to pay) and community workshops.
- Some Year 3 projects include: Data exploration and digital systems, AI and innovation projects (with Innovate UK and University of Plymouth), UKRI Resilient UK Coastal Communities and Seas programme, Celtic Seas & Western Channel Pelagic fisheries management plan.
- Some more specific examples of projects include:
 - NC34: Pelagic monitoring and plankton communities. Monitoring changes in plankton communities in coastal pelagic waters. This will enable us to detect, understand and interpret change in plankton communities including how these changes impact the ecosystem services they provide and any management measures that will be needed to restore ecosystem services.
 - NC43: Decision making for a thriving marine environment. This project has delivered an interactive decision-making database, to understand the decision-making system

that affects our marine environment and its dependent sectors and communities, and where and when a natural capital approach can be implemented in decision making to benefit nature and people. In year 3, products will start to be implemented, including learning and understanding overall capability needed to deliver transformation, so that decision-making is informed by a natural capital approach in business as usual in as many cases as possible.

- NC44: Place-based assessment. Nature recovery in different local contexts. Develop understanding of different local contexts and priorities, to understand what is feasible and relevant in local settings.
- Priorities for near term for mNCEA – finalising publications, embedding findings into policy and using tools. Delivering and developing an end of programme report summarising findings. Transitioning into business as usual and bidding rough next spending review for an extension to the programme.
- Opportunities for UK natural capital join up: NCEA stakeholder showcase in Sept. Individual projects: FMP and GES. Increasing opportunities to share outputs as work is published online. Friends of mNCEA newsletter? Virtual policy brief and technical talks?

Following the presentation there was some discussion on the following points:

- Interest was noted in seeing the end results from the aspects related to nature technology and innovation - AI, digital systems, etc. EH noted that the results would be available in published reports.
- Regarding the application for future funding, it was asked if this might be more successful if future work was positioned as a wider partnership with other UK nations? EH noted that this could be an exciting approach and would take the query back to Defra colleagues.
- There was a question around the tool for decision makers and if the learnings from this had helped to inform policy development and design. EH noted not for this particular workstream, but the MMO have been looking at integrating ecosystem services for SEA and are developing a methodology. Embedding the approach into policy is challenging.

Item 2: Facility for Investment Readiness Scotland (FIRNS) project Enabling markets for marine natural capital (Simone Martino on behalf of KALY and SAMS)

- Part of the FIRNS development phase, so was a short 6-month project. Agreed activities were to identify relevant stakeholders, address attitude of public to marine natural capital; initiate a discussion with investors and legal owners of the seabed and participate in natural capital community of practice.
- Wanted to achieve understanding of the problems of investing in marine conservation, and specifically the formulation of the marine NC code. Additionally, the project sought to investigate stakeholders and general public reaction to private investment in marine conservation.
- Kaly took forward a legal and commercial workshop with potential investors, Crown Estate Scotland, market enablers, marine NGOs and charities and interests representing coastal communities. The output from this was a Heads of Terms legal document which outlines a hypothetical legal agreement between an owner, developer, investor and independent validation/verification body for a native oyster restoration project.
- James Hutton Institute and SAMS took forward a stakeholder's survey on views of marine natural capital markets. Responses showed that investment in the marine environment is a new topic and there can be difficult to understand. It may be open to greenwashing, may not be developed as a fair market.

- Similar views were elicited from targeted marine and coastal stakeholders – beneficial, but there can be some risks. Risks can be mitigated through collaboration and establishing appropriate governance approaches.
- A workshop was conducted with SeaWilding, Argyll and Coast Countryside Trust, Highlands Rewilding, Community Association of Lochs and Sounds (CAOLAS); Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Crown Estate Scotland; NatureScot and The Highlands and Islands Environment Forum, to examine highlighted that marine natural capital is promising but it is needed to manage risks. It is also necessary for these markets to be legally and financially transparent. Engagement of the community is essential as well as capacity building, rigorous oversight and benefit sharing.
- Future work will include establishing a champion for a marine natural capital code and propose one privately funded oyster restoration project in Scottish waters to Crown Estate Scotland.

Reports and resources from the project are available here: <https://kaly.eco/resources/enabling-markets-for-marine-natural-capital/>

Item 3: Blue Carbon webinar

At a previous meeting it was suggested to hold a blue carbon webinar. Jessica Jones (JJ) set out a proposed structure for this - a 90 minute long session in the autumn, with four 15 min presentations on the science and 30 mins for discussion. She asked meeting attendees for views on the proposed structure and if the session should be open to wider attendance. Hannah Rudman (HR) noted that an hour lunchtime slot works really well, based on the Nature Finance Pioneers experience. HR would be keen to co-host with the pioneers. James Merchant offered to help organise the webinar sessions if help is needed. Some ideas were further discussed, and given the range of topic areas within the subject, people suggested a series might be more appropriate. JJ will continue to coordinate with SS and CL and draft a proposed programme, working with members of the Blue Carbon Forum.

It was also noted that a Blue Carbon webinar is planned for the MASTS ASM in December, details are here: <https://masts.ac.uk/annual-science-meeting/>

Item 4: AOB

There was no AOB raised. JJ noted she would send a poll for the next meeting, and would send an update on the actions from the last meeting via email/minutes.

Summary of Actions:

Ongoing from Previous meeting	
1. Check if possible to share community benefits report from FMS.	CT
2. Organising blue carbon webinar/s	JJ, SS, CL