

The Manx Blue Carbon Working Group

Wednesday 25th May – Meeting notes



Attendees:

David Beard	Manx Fish Producers' Organisation (MFPO)
Adam Creamore	KPMG – Advisory Manager ESG
Peter Duncan	DEFA - Senior Marine Biodiversity Officer
Jack Emmerson	DEFA – Sea Fisheries Policy Manager
Claire Evans	National Oceanography Centre (NOC)
Rowan Henthorn	DEFA - Manx Blue Carbon Project
Lara Howe	Manx Wildlife Trust (MWT) - Marine Officer
Stuart Jenkins	Bangor University – Professor of Oceanography
Jacqui Keenan	DEFA - Manx Blue Carbon Project
Graham Makepeace-Warne	MWT - Engagement Manager & Climate Change Champion
Leigh Morris	MWT - CEO
Hannah Muir	Swansea University – PhD Researcher
Simon Nicholas	KPMG – Assurance and consulting partner
Emma Rowan	DoI – Senior Infrastructure Policy Officer
Richard Selman	DEFA – Ecosystem Policy Manager

Meeting overview

- Huge opportunity for the Isle of Man to deliver a blue carbon project in a holistic, innovative and inclusive manner – incorporating cutting edge science with conservation, business and industry.
- Positive interest in collaboration on all sides, with recognition of the opportunity for IOM to capitalise on the advantage of its size, and areas of expertise.
- Understanding that the project must be aligned with other activities that promote sustainable development in the territorial sea – particularly renewable energy and other critical infrastructure projects.
- Recognition that the development of vibrant and innovative nature-based solutions is essential for the sustainability of the Isle of Man's environment, community, and economy.

- One key challenge will be managing the pace, needs, and focus of all the parties of the working group in relation to blue carbon research and investment/finance opportunities.
- Need to balance a 'good enough' approach to developing carbon credits to satisfy business needs, whilst fulfilling the requirement for robust scientific evidence to inform that approach.
- Potential to develop a 'gold standard' carbon finance framework on the island, utilising the range of local expertise.

Project background

- The Manx Blue Carbon Project is 3 year DEFA project, funded by the Climate Change Transformation Fund, split into two funding phases; phase 1a (first 12 months) and phase 1b (following 2 years). Phase 1a is fully funded and a further bid will be made to conduct phase 1b, if the results from phase 1a meet the agreed assessment criteria.
- The overall aim of the project is to develop a management plan that maximises natural carbon capture and storage in the Manx territorial sea, whilst maintaining and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- The initial 12 months (phase 1a) of the project aims to ground-truth some estimates of carbon capture and storage within Manx waters, and identify potential for maximising carbon via protection and restoration i.e. assessing whether this management approach will support the Government's ambition to reach Net Zero by 2050 (with 45% emissions reduction by 2035).
- The Manx Blue Carbon Project is being delivered by two DEFA officers, Jacqui Keenan and Rowan Henthorn, with scientists from the National Oceanography Centre and Swansea University, however there is scope to include additional partners as the project develops.
- Scientific research is being delivered through a PhD studentship - which has been fully funded for the three year project period - in partnership with NOC and Swansea University.
- The project has additional funding for a second PhD, the research focus of which is yet to be confirmed but is likely to centre on fisheries management in relation to blue carbon science, and will likely be delivered in partnership with Bangor University.
- Phase 1a of the project runs from February 2022 – February 2023, with a second funding bid for phase 1b expected to be submitted in October 2022.

Introduction and updates

[David Beard](#) - CEO Manx Fish Producers' Organisation for the last 8 years – representing all mobile gear fishers and 50% of potters (in relation to the number of pots rather than potters). Worked with DEFA and the industry to build a collaborative relationship, prioritising a sustainable approach to fisheries management on the island; this has been done by reducing the number of vessels to match effort with resource, closing areas, and surveying grounds with industry and academic partners to target grounds for efficiency and reduce overall footprint. Worked on the Ramsey Bay Marine Nature Reserve - an excellent example of sustainable collaborative management.

[Adam Creamore](#) – KPMG Advisory Manager ESG. Role includes working with clients on ESG opportunities, and providing businesses with guidance on issues such as reducing their carbon footprint.

[Peter Duncan](#) – DEFA Senior Marine Biodiversity Officer. Assisted in the development and initial funding bid for the project and now participates in the Manx Blue Carbon Steering Group. Role relates primarily to the management of the island's network of Marine Nature Reserves (MNRs) and inshore fisheries management – both of which tie into the Manx Blue Carbon Project.

[Jack Emmerson](#) – DEFA Marine Fisheries Policy Manager. Assists in aligning the Blue Carbon Project with fisheries policy management through the Manx Blue Carbon Steering Group.

[Claire Evans](#) – The National Oceanography Centre (NOC). A biogeochemist who has worked from the deep ocean to the nearshore, more recently shifting towards the coastal zone to look at carbon storage and sequestration in relation to land use change and the management of coastal vegetation. Currently working on various blue carbon projects, including in Asia and the UK. Grew up in Laxey, now living and working in Southampton at the NOC. Claire is the principle supervisor for the Manx Blue Carbon PhD project.

[Lara Howe](#) - Marine Officer at Manx Wildlife Trust for the last 8 years. Role encompasses all work in relation to marine conservation on the island. In direct relation to blue carbon, MWT are planning seagrass restoration trials by transplanting healthy plants into Port Erin Bay – at sites known historically for seagrass, but where none is currently present. MWT also work to raise awareness of the presence and importance of blue carbon habitats, and work closely with DEFA on other marine work such as the development of the MNR management plans.

[Stuart Jenkins](#) – Head of the School of Ocean Sciences, Bangor University. Academic lead for the Bangor University and Isle of Man Government fisheries management contract – which directly relates to blue carbon resource management. Stuart also introduced his colleagues in their absence: [Martin Skov](#), who has worked extensively in blue carbon (specifically mangroves and saltmarsh), the impact of sea level rise on blue carbon resources, and vegetation type as a predictor of carbon stores in blue carbon habitats; [Jan Hiddink](#), a biogeochemist who has worked extensively on the impact of fisheries disturbance – notably recently questioning the Sala *et al.*, paper in relation to seabed disturbance from fisheries on carbon stores; and [Hilary Kennedy](#), world-renowned biogeochemical blue carbon expert who has written about blue carbon for the UNIPCC.

[Graham Makepeace-Warne](#) - Engagement Manager and Climate Change Champion at Manx Wildlife Trust. Communicating with the public on nature, conservation, environmental issues, and sharing sustainability best practice, as well as linking with the wider network of Wildlife Trusts on climate change initiatives and issues.

[Leigh Morris](#) - CEO at Manx Wildlife Trust. Professional background and personal interest in horticulture, as well as a keen scuba diver and Seasearch surveyor – all of which aligns well with the pilot project on seagrass restoration. The Wildlife Trusts are a federation of 46 independent Trusts, and are currently considering the formation of an Irish Sea Group including Trusts from all 6 nations. MWT recently launched their [new strategy](#) which includes a strong focus on nature-based solutions, and the multi-benefits of this approach in addressing the biodiversity and climate crises. MWT are aligning with responsible corporates such as KPMG to deliver exciting nature-based projects, of which blue carbon is one strand.

[Hannah Muir](#) – Swansea University PhD candidate, in partnership with the NOC. Working to answer some of the scientific research questions associated with the Manx Blue Carbon Project – specifically to build up a picture of the carbon stores and sequestration rates within different blue carbon habitats within the territorial sea, and where that carbon is coming from. During the phase 1a, under the supervision of Claire Evans and [Richard Unsworth](#) (Associate Professor at Swansea specialising in marine ecology, particularly seagrass ecology and restoration work), Hannah will conduct 3 field campaigns to collect samples and data (inshore coring, offshore coring, and intertidal mapping by drone), before analysing the results at NOC.

[Simon Nicholas](#) – Partner at KPMG and their Regional Offshore Head of ESG (including the Caymans, Bermuda, Jamaica, Jersey, Guernsey, and the Isle of Man); also Chief Economic Advisor to the Isle of Man Government. KPMG are very interested in the blue economy, with the recognition that “[you can’t go green without blue](#)”, and that there is a need to address how consultants communicate these issues to the business world. Interested in engaging the business community to help fund research into nature-based solutions, carbon credits, and ESG opportunities – connecting corporate finances with doing genuine good. Isle of Man-based project is currently one of 5 key ESG projects which KPMG are working on globally.

[Emma Rowan](#) - Department of Infrastructure (DoI), Senior Infrastructure Policy Officer and Chartered Planner, having worked specifically on marine spatial planning in the DoI from 2010–2018. Now coordinates activities for the territorial sea, including developing the Marine Infrastructure Management Act, giving guidance from a legislative and policy perspective in relation to offshore energy, pipelines, shipping and navigation etc. A representative of the Territorial Sea Committee – a decision-making body for the territorial sea, with members from the DoI, DEFA, Department for Enterprise, the Attorney General’s Office and other government bodies as and when required. Emma noted from a blue carbon perspective, the DoI is the owner of the seabed and has been tasked with maximising the economic interests of the territorial sea; as such, a pragmatic and joined up approach is required to ensure all activities are aligned.

[Richard Selman](#) – DEFA Head of Ecosystem Policy Team, responsible for the Manx Blue Carbon Project, Biosphere, Plastics, and Biodiversity. Key links include sharing the project with the wider Biosphere network, and advising on offshore developments.

Department for Enterprise – Unable to attend this meeting, but keen to be represented in future meetings, to explore opportunities for collaboration and link blue carbon and the blue economy with the Government's Economic Strategy.

Structure, function and terms of reference

- The group agreed that a terms of reference was appropriate. The Manx Blue Carbon Team will draft these and circulate for members to review and comment, with the final version to be ready for agreement at the next meeting (September).
- Member organisations (or teams) will have two allocated 'seats' at each meeting, whether in person or online, with requests for additional seats to be made well in advance of any meeting.
- Chart outlining roles of working group members to be shared – including the focus and role of each organisation, and important bodies related to working group/blue carbon project (Appendix 1).
- Flow diagram outlining reporting and governance structure of the Manx Blue Carbon Project to be shared with working group members (Appendix 2).

Date of next meeting

- Next meeting to be held in September (date TBC via doodle poll) to discuss field work outcomes, updates from all members on blue carbon and blue economy work, and to ensure partners feed in to future funding bid for phase 1b of the project. Further meeting in January, ahead of end of phase 1a.

Any other business

No other business was discussed.

Appendix 1 Working Group - roles and interests

Organisation /Department	Representative(s)	Interest
Bangor University	Stuart Jenkins Martin Skov Jan Hiddink Hilary Kennedy	Blue carbon management, fisheries science, marine conservation
DEFA – Blue Carbon Team	Jacqui Keenan Rowan Henthorn Richard Selman (Ecosystem Policy)	Blue carbon management, biodiversity and ecosystem services
DEFA – Climate Change Transformation Team	Glen Geeves Aly Lewin	Holistic approach to climate change mitigation and emissions reduction, blue carbon management.
DEFA – Fisheries and marine conservation	Peter Duncan Jack Emmerson	Fisheries management, marine conservation
Department for Enterprise	Andrew Stewart (TBC)	Economic opportunities, blue economy
Department of Infrastructure	Emma Rowan	Management of the territorial sea, maximising economic opportunities of the territorial sea
KPMG	Simon Nicholas Adam Creamore	Sustainable development, developing the blue economy, financing nature-based solutions
Manx Fish Producers' Organisation	David Beard	Representing the interest of the Manx mobile gear fleet, developing sustainable fisheries
Manx Wildlife Trust	Leigh Morris Lara Howe Graham Makepeace-Warne	Marine conservation, biodiversity, blue carbon, nature-based solutions, community engagement
National Oceanography Centre	Claire Evans James Strong	Blue carbon management, blue economy
Swansea University	Hannah Muir Richard Unsworth	Blue carbon management, marine conservation

Appendix 2 Project reporting and governance

