



## NE ATLANTIC MARINE BIOLOGICAL AQC SCHEME COMMITTEE MEETING

**Agenda 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 1330-1600**

**Venue: Teams Online**

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Meeting ID: 381 825 954 138

Passcode: CW2xX7EU

**Confirmed Attendees:** Graham Phillips (GP, EA, Finance Manager), Claire Mason (CM, CEFAS, PSA Technical Manager), Myles O'Reilly (MOR, SEPA, Benthic Invertebrates Technical Manager), Tim Mackie (TM, DAERA, Senior Scientific Officer – **acting Chair for this meeting**), Claire Taylor (CT, MBA Technical Secretary), Kate Wade (KW JNCC Epibiotic Technical Manager), David Hall (DH APEM Benthic Administrator), Matt Green (MG, NRW, Marine Monitoring Ecologist), Lydia McIntyre-Brown (LMB, APEM Ltd, PSA administrator), Georgina Brackenreed-Johnston (GBJ, APEM Ltd, Macroalgae administrator), Michael Redman (MR, Ocean Ecology, Contractors Rep), Debbie Walsh (DW, APEM Ltd, Fish Administrator) and Vera Fonseca (VR, CEFAS, eDNA Technical Manager)

**Apologies:** David Johns (DJ, MBA, Chair), Jim Ellis (JE, CEFAS, Fish Technical Manager), Gillian Annett (GA, DAERA, Macroalgal Technical Manager) and Ross Griffin (RG, Ocean Ecology)

**TM led a quick introduction of the committee members to MR, who acted as contractor representative.**

<b>1. Last Meetings Actions</b> (summarised below on the agenda)		ALL
<b>2. Minutes of the last meeting</b>		CT
Approval of September meeting minutes		DJ
<b>3. Epibiota update</b>		KW
<b>4. Phytoplankton update</b>		RS
<b>5. Priorities to HBDSEG</b>		DJ
<b>6. PSA update</b>		CM/LMB
<b>7. Benthic Invertebrates update</b>		DH/MoR
<b>8. Macroalgae update</b>		GA/GBJ
<b>9. Fish update</b>		JE/DW
<b>10. Zooplankton update</b>		DJ
<b>11. eDNA – Under Development</b>		KW/VF
<b>12. AOB</b>		ALL
<b>13. Contractor Questions</b>		RG/MR
<b>14. Finance update* Confidential</b>		GP

## 1. Ongoing actions:

### PSA:

Guidance to be updated following on from workshop re laser sizing ring tests. **Action: CM to implement this prior to next NMBAQC committee meeting - update, this is ongoing with the aim to discuss further in next FY.**

**Action: GP to add a secondary contact to next year's application forms which should alleviate any communication issues. This will be picked up in the summer.**

### Benthic - TDP

The committee congratulated DH and team regarding work on TDP. This is a 'live' document and would be useful to review annually (created August 2023) with version control **Action: MOR, update to review around the time the contract is up for renewal. TDP will also have version control. Further update – this will be reviewed at next meeting post contract renewal, ongoing.**

**Action: MOR/DH to update literature and bibliography list for website. CT to upload - DONE**

### Fish:

The group discussed ichthyoplankton, currently falling between fish and zooplankton and no group is currently picking this up. DJ advised the MBA have ran fish larvae workshops in the past. Also harder to get specimens with fewer fish surveys being undertaken.

**Action: DJ to investigate getting fish samples from MBA Sepia during their sampling to St Austell Bay (goes out in next few weeks following delay) DW requires 20 specimens of each type – see fish section for further information. Ongoing**

### eDNA:

The UK has also initiated a marine related eDNA centre of excellence. This is all very much funding dependent. **Action DJ to drop KW/VR an email to look into pursuing R&D money from DEFRA - Done.**

The committee thought it was a good idea to sit eDNA under the NMBAQC umbrella as an under-development component and report to HBDSEG. **Action: DJ to report at the next HBDSEG meeting (in a few weeks' time) and speak to KW to see if some guidelines can be implemented. Action: CT to look at drafting something for the NMBAQC website. Update: few lines added to Under Development section of website but needs expanding, Action KW to send CT some notes for website.**

The group also discussed how to acquire the required material as this can be done in parallel with the collection of samples. Could use fish as a good starting point? Discussion also took place in looking at molecular work around Blue Green algae/Cyanobacteria which has become prolific in some areas of the UK. **Action: DJ to contact RS - ongoing**

### AOB:

The committee discussed putting together a video for the website/other social media platforms/press release to celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. **Action: MG to collate – see AOB section**

To create a summary document of the groups achievements which could go into the Marine Biologist magazine. **Action DJ to approach editor, authors needed. Update: this has been done and can be found here <https://mymba.mba.ac.uk/resource/thirty-years-of-data-quality-assurance.html>**

Myles has drafted a Beginners Guide to Macrofauna **Action: CT to add onto website once finalised - DONE**

2. Minutes of the last meeting (TM): approved

3. Epibiota update (KW):

The Epibiota component is now being led by KW. **Action CT to remove JA contact details from website.**

There have been a few steering meetings with a focus on training, particularly as this doesn't seem to be covered by many universities. Thoughts are of modular /online training with particular attention to imagery.

Epibiota guidelines are being updated with ongoing work to feed into this. Interpretation guidelines will also be reworded as analytical guidelines. There will be a major restructure next year. **Action: KW to circulate documents to the committee.**

4. Phytoplankton update (RS):

The IPI 2024 exercise is fully closed now and the IPI 2025 exercise has not been announced as yet. The IPHAB committee is meeting on the 18-20th March and we will be discussing the IPI programme in detail and making an announcement after this. I will be giving an online presentation at that meeting. It is taking place in the IOC of UNESCO in Paris.

The IPI programme will be managed and organised by a different institution from here on. There are a couple of institutions interested in taking it over and we will make a decision at this meeting in relation to this.

I will know more after this meeting but the idea is that whoever takes over will make an announcement about the programme shortly after and I will make sure that NMBAQC continues to be associated with the new host institution going forward.

5. Priorities to HBDSEG (DJ):

6. PSA update (CM/LMB):

**PARTICLE SIZE COMPONENT PROGRESS REPORT**

**2024-25, Year 31**

**6.1 Subscriptions (to date)**

LabCode	PS 92/93	PS94/ 95	PS – OS31/32/33
PSA_3101	1	1	1
PSA_3102	1	1	1
PSA_3103	1	1	1
PSA_3104	1	1	1
PSA_3105	1	1	-
PSA_3106	1	1	1

PSA_3107	1	1	1
PSA_3108	1	1	-
PSA_3109	1	1	-
PSA_3110	1	1	1
PSA_3111	1	1	-
PSA_3112	1	1	-
PSA_3113	1	1	1
PSA_3114	1	1	-
PSA_3115	1	1	-
PSA_3116	1	1	-
PSA_3117	1	1	-
PSA_3118	-	-	1
PSA_3119	-	-	1
<b>° (change from 2023/24)</b>	<b>17(+2)</b>	<b>17 (+2)</b>	<b>10 (0)</b>

## 6.2 2024-2025, Year 31 Operations

Particle Size exercises are to be distributed in line with the 2024-2025 timetable (available below). Returns, results and exercise status details are summarised in the table below.

Exercise	Status	Returns / Comments
<b>PS92</b>	<p>Samples to be distributed 06/01/25</p> <p>Submission deadline 21/02/25</p> <p>Interim reports to be issued 07/03/25</p> <p>Final Report to be issued 31/03/25</p> <p><b>Exercise in progress</b></p>	<p>Sands Test</p> <p>13 out of 17 returned results</p>
<b>PS93</b>	<p>Samples to be distributed 06/01/25</p> <p>Submission deadline 21/02/25</p> <p>Interim reports to be issued 07/03/25</p> <p>Final Report to be issued 31/03/25</p> <p><b>Exercise in progress</b></p>	<p>Mixed Test</p> <p>17 out of 17 returned results</p>
<b>PS94</b>	<p>Samples to be distributed 10/03/25</p> <p>Submission deadline 21/04/25</p> <p>Interim reports to be issued 05/05/25</p> <p>Final Report to be issued 09/06/24</p> <p><b>Exercise not started</b></p>	<p>Fines Test</p>
<b>PS95</b>	<p>Samples to be distributed 10/03/25</p> <p>Submission deadline 21/04/25</p> <p>Interim reports to be issued 05/05/25</p> <p>Final Report to be issued 09/06/24</p> <p><b>Exercise not started</b></p>	<p>Gravel Test</p>
<b>OS31-33</b>	<p>Data submission deadline</p> <p><b>Batch 1</b> 16/12/2043/ <b>Batch 2</b> 21/03/25</p> <p>Sample submission deadline</p> <p><b>Batch 1</b> 14/02/2025/ <b>Batch 2</b> 25/04/25</p> <p>OS Module Summary Report deadline</p> <p><b>Batch 1</b> 25/04/2025/ <b>Batch 2</b> 11/07/25</p> <p><b>Exercises on-going</b></p>	<p>3 out of 10 data sets submitted</p> <p>9 out of 30 samples selected</p> <p>9 out of 30 samples received</p> <p>0 out of 10 reports sent</p>

**2024/25  
Annual  
Report &  
SoPs**

Annual Report & Statement of  
Performance documents deadline  
30/07/25

Report template drafted.

### 6.3 2024 - 2025 Comments

#### PS92+PS93

Samples were distributed in-line with the timetable. At time of writing 13 out of 17 results have been returned. Two participants requested extensions to the deadline and two participants are yet to submit results or communicate. Interim report writing is due to start next week (03/03/2025) once all data has been received.

#### PS94+PS95

Samples are prepped and ready to send out on the 10<sup>th</sup> March.

#### PS-OS – Batch 1

Three participants have chosen to send data for batch 1 deadline. All samples have been selected and have arrived at the lab, all data workbooks have been received. Reports will be completed once AQC analysis has been completed.

### 6.4 AOB

Claire Mason is looking to organise an extra laser test for those who want to participate in a study comparing different laser including the new Bettersizer. Lydia McIntyre-Brown to send out information and gauge interest.

#### **Particle Size Component 2024-2025 Timetable (Scheme Year 31)**

Module / Exercise	Event	Date
PS92 & PS93	Samples distributed	06/01/2025
	Results deadline	<b>21/02/2025</b>
	Interim reporting deadline	07/03/2025
	Final report deadline	31/03/2025
PS94 & PS95	Samples distributed	10/03/2025
	Results deadline	<b>21/04/2025</b>
	Interim reporting deadline	05/05/2025

	Final report deadline	09/06/2025
PS-OS 31 - 33	Request for sample data distributed	16/12/2024
Batch 1	Data submission deadline for sample selection	<b>17/01/2025</b>
	Selected samples submission deadline	<b>14/02/2025</b>
	Interim report final deadline (for samples received before 14 Feb 2025)	25/04/2025
Batch 2	Data submission deadline for sample selection	<b>21/03/25</b>
	Selected samples submission deadline	<b>25/04/25</b>
	Interim report final deadline	11/07/2025
Annual Report	Annual report deadline	30/07/2025
Workshop –	Venue TBC	TBC

## 7. Benthic Invertebrates update (MoR/DH):

### BENTHIC INVERTEBRATE COMPONENT PROGRESS REPORT

2024-25, Year 31

#### 7.1 Subscriptions

LabCode	RT67/68	LR29	OS86/87/88
BI_3101	1	1	1
BI_3102	1	1	1
BI_3103	1	1	1
BI_3104	1	-	1
BI_3105	1	-	-
BI_3106	1	-	-
BI_3107	1	-	-
BI_3108	1	-	-
BI_3109	1	-	-
BI_3110	1	1	-
BI_3111	1	1	-
BI_3112	1	-	1
BI_3113	1	-	-
BI_3114	1	-	-
BI_3115	1	-	-
BI_3116	1	-	1
BI_3117	1	-	-
BI_3118	1	-	-
BI_3119	1	-	-
BI_3120	1	-	-
BI_3121	1	-	1
BI_3122	1	-	1
BI_3123	1	-	1



BI_3129	-	-	1
BI_3130	-	-	1
BI_3131	-	-	1
BI_3132	-	-	1
BI_3133	-	-	1
BI_3134	-	-	1
BI_3135	-	-	1
BI_3136	-	-	1
BI_3137	-	-	1
BI_3138	-	-	1
BI_3139	-	-	1
° (change from 2023/24)	23 (+2)	5 (-1)	20 (-2)

## 7.2 2024-2025, Year 31 Operations

Benthic Invertebrate exercises are distributed in line with the 2024-2025 timetable (available below). Returns, results and exercise status details are summarised in the table below.

Exercise	Status	Returns / Comments
	Specimens distributed 06/01/25	General Ring Test
	Submission deadline 07/03/25	2 out of 23 data sets received to date
	Interim reports to be issued 14/03/25	
	Ring Test Bulletin to be issued 04/04/25	
	<b>Exercise on-going</b>	
<b>RT68</b>	Specimens to be distributed 10/03/25	Targeted Ring Test – TBC
	Submission deadline 16/05/25	
	Interim reports to be issued 23/05/25	
	Ring Test Bulletin to be issued 13/06/25	
	<b>Exercise in preparation</b>	

<b>LR29</b>	Request for specimens distributed 16/12/24  Submission deadline 31/01/25 (to be extended)  Interim reports deadline 21/03/25 (to be extended)  LR Module Summary Report to be issued 28/03/25  <b>Module on-going</b>	1 of the 5 sets of specimens received and reported; 1 set confirmed in transit    Deadline to be extended and reminders issued
<b>OS86-88</b>	Sample data requested 16/12/24  Data submission deadline <b>Batch 2</b> 28/03/25  Sample submission deadline <b>Batch 2</b> 02/05/25  OS Module Summary Report deadline 18/07/25  <b>Module on-going</b>	9 out of 20 data sets received 27 out of 27 requested samples received  10 samples reported to date  3 samples currently with the external auditor
<b>2024/25 Annual Report &amp; SoPs</b>	Annual Report & Statement of Performance documents deadline 25/07/25  <b>On-going</b>	Draft report on-going  SoP template created

### 7.3 Issues arising

#### Taxonomic Literature Bibliography Update

An update to the 2020 bibliography of taxonomic literature for marine and brackish water fauna and flora of the North East Atlantic is to be posted on the scheme website following some minor final edits.

**Action: CT has uploaded onto website, CT to promote on mail chimp and social media.**

### 7.4 Taxonomic Workshops

#### Expert Taxonomic Workshop, University of Galway

Taxonomic workshop planning is on-going, and details will be confirmed as soon as possible along with the issue of a workshop EOI form. This is likely to be in the Autumn.

TDP was also discussed and with MG drawing attention to the fact that it should be used in labs going forward and include it in specifications.

There was also talk of being part of NMBAQC and should we be excluding organisations who don't use it. The committee felt that NMBAQC should be included in tenders but if this is not possible then skills must be proven and must partake in an equivalent scheme. If not in a scheme TDP procedures should be followed.

### Invertebrate Component 2024-2025 Timetable (Scheme Year 31)

Module / Exercise	Event	Date
RT67 - General	Samples distributed	06/01/25
	Results deadline	07/03/25
	Interim reporting deadline	14/03/25
	Final report deadline	04/04/25
RT68 - Targeted	Samples distributed	10/03/25
	Results deadline	16/05/25
	Interim reporting deadline	23/05/25
	Final report deadline	13/06/25
LR29	Protocol and request for specimens distributed	16/12/24
	Specimen submission deadline	31/01/25
	Interim reports deadline	21/03/25
	LR summary report deadline	28/03/25
OS86–88	Request for sample data distributed	16/12/24
Batch 1	Data submission deadline for sample selection	17/01/25
	Selected samples submission deadline	31/01/25
	Interim report final deadline (for samples received before 31 January 2025)	28/03/25
Batch 2	Data submission deadline for sample selection	28/03/25

	Selected samples submission deadline	<b>02/05/25</b>
	Interim report final deadline	04/07/25
	OS summary report deadline	18/07/25
Annual Report	Annual report deadline	25/07/25
Workshop – experts	Venue TBC (University of Galway)	TBC (Autumn 2025)
Workshop – beginners	TBC – subject to demand	TBC

DH highlighted there may be interest in Own Sample tests from South Africa.

## 8. Macroalgal update (GA/GBJ):

### MACROALGAE BIOMASS AND PERCENTAGE COVER COMPONENT PROGRESS REPORT

2024-25, Year 31

#### 8.1 Subscriptions

Lab Code	RT16 OMC	RT16 OMB
MA_3001	1	1
MA_3002	1	-
MA_3003	1	-
MA_3004	1	1
MA_3005	-	1
MA_3006	-	1
MA_3007	1	-
MA_3008	1	1
MA_3009	-	1
MA_3010	1	1
MA_3011	1	1
MA_3012	1	1
MA_3013	1	1
MA_3014	-	-
<b>Total</b> (change from last year)	<b>10 (-1)</b>	<b>10 (+2)</b>

Government participants: EA, AFBI, DAERA, NRW

Private participants: x2

## 8.2 . 2024-2025, Year 31 Operations

All circulations of MA exercises will be distributed in line with the 2024-2025 timetable (available below). Returns to date are summarised in the table below.

Exercise	Status	Returns / Comments
<b>RT16</b> <b>OMC</b>	Samples distributed: 27/01/2025	
	Sample deadline: 07/03/2025	3 out of 10 returned results
	Interim reports issued: 04/04/2025	
	Final reports issued: 02/05/2025	
	<b>Exercise in progress</b>	
<b>RT16</b> <b>OMB</b>	Samples distributed: 27/01/2025	
	Sample deadline: 07/03/2025	3 out of 10 returned results
	Interim reports issued: 04/04/2025	
	Final reports issued: 02/05/2025	
	<b>Exercise in progress</b>	

## 8.1 Notes

Of the ten laboratories participating in the OMC test three have submitted results so far, comprising thirteen individual submissions of data in total.

The OMB parcel to the Estonian Institute was delayed due to courier problems but they were still able to submit results within the original timescale and no extension was required.

Following distribution of the OMB tests one laboratory decided they no longer wished to participate in the test. It was decided not to seek remuneration to cover the preparation and postage costs .

Initially we were informed of two EA participating laboratories were still deciding as to whether they will participate in this year's OMC test. One has since confirmed that they will not be going ahead with the test but we are still awaiting confirmation from the second.

Following feedback from participants in previous ring tests the macroalgal biomass tests in RT16 comprised of mixed artificial materials including gravel and cockle shells. In Test B 'fauna' was added to highlight the need for extracting 'organic' material that would affect the weight.

**Macroalgae Biomass and Percentage Cover Component 2024-2025 Timetable (Scheme Year 31)**

Module / Exercise	Event	Date
RT15 OMB	Samples distributed: 27/01/2025	23/01/2025
	Sample deadline: 07/03/2025	
	Interim reports issued: 04/04/2025	
	Final reports issued: 03/05/2025	
	<b>Exercise in progress</b>	
RT15 OMC	Samples distributed: 27/01/2025	24/01/2025
	Sample deadline: 07/03/2025	
	Interim reports issued: 04/04/2025	
	Final reports issued: 03/05/2025	
	<b>Exercise in progress</b>	

**9. Fish Update (JE/DW):**

**FISH COMPONENT PROGRESS REPORT**

**2024-2025, Year 31**

**9.1 2024-2025, Year 31 Subscriptions (to date)**

LabCode	F-RRT16	F-RT18
b codes not assigned yet	8	9
Total (change from last year)	<b>13 (-5)</b>	<b>14 -5)</b>

## 9.2 2024-2025, Year 31 Operations

Module / Exercise	Event	Date
<b>F-RRT15</b>	Protocol and request for specimens distributed (including supply of fish postage boxes)	24/03/25
	<b>Specimen submission deadline</b>	<b>05/05/25</b>
	Final report deadline	02/06/25
<b>F-RT17</b>	Samples (specimens & images) distributed	05/05/25
	<b>Results deadline</b>	<b>20/06/25</b>
	Interim reporting deadline	18/07/25
	Final report deadline	04/08/25
<b>Annual Report</b>	Annual report deadline	30/08/25
<b>Workshop – experts</b>	TBC – subject to demand	TBC
<b>Workshop – beginners</b>	TBC – subject to demand	TBC

Provisional timetable for year 31 above. Waiting on one subscription to be confirmed.

## 9.3 2023-2024, Year 30 Operations

F-RRT15 - 11 out of 13 submissions received. Interim results sent and no objections. Report in draft to be sent to Jim for review this week.

F-RT17 – interim results sent and no objections. Final report in draft, to be sent to Jim for review next week. Annual report to be drafted once reviews complete on component reports.

## 9.4 2022-2023, Year 29 Operations

Statements of Performance documents to be reissued following discrepancy of years of performance.



### 9.5 Issues arising

No fish collected by APEM in end of 2024 due to cancelled surveys and poor fishing on others. No fish collected by MI on IGFS 2024 due to poor fishing. Another MI survey due to go out in April, work request sent to survey manager.

To make contact with Millport biological station in Scotland for request of specimens.

### 9.6 Taxonomic Workshop

Currently no taxonomic workshop is planned for fish. A targeted workshop can be developed if sufficient interest is shown.

### 9.7 Outstanding issues

N/A

**Action: DW to email AC/TM for help with specimens.**

### 10. Zooplankton Update (DJ):

CT advised there will soon be a replacement Technical Manager after the departure of existing staff. To run ring test in the next FY once personnel in place.

### 11. eDNA (VF/KW):

There is no announcement on ring tests as yet. KW advised there was recently an organised workshop of ~40 people from 25 organisations to look into using eDNA methodology. Discussions from this highlights there is a need for standards to be picked up as a theme with a working group set up. This group will look at how to facilitate guidelines and work towards best practice. Also looking into improving barcode libraries. **Action: KW to share with the committee once discussions drafted.**

Project falls under HBDSEG group with JNCC looking into funding for standards work. There has also been work in this area in the Southern Hemisphere.

### 12. AOB:

From MG: Awareness of non-natives horizon scanning taxa.

This stems from MG working on horizon document with CEFAS and is it possible for some sort of alert for people to look out for non-native species/new emergent taxa of concern. How could we communicate this? The committee felt it was best through components on an annual basis. **Action: DH to speak to Tim Worsfold for his opinion, APEM to investigate.**

GP raised a request for membership only organisations – could they not take part in ring tests but still be part of the scheme? The committee felt the only benefit from this would be to get priority attendance of workshops.

The group discussed compiling a video for our anniversary with long serving members (DH,CM,MOR,MS and DJ) to speak in their laboratories. Could have generic laboratory footage and interview style. **Action: MG to email those aforementioned and CT to see if we could get long serving participants to also provide testimonials. DH to provide CT with list.**

**Action: MG to compile video, to ask for NRW Comms assistance.**

### **13. Contractor Questions (RG):**

One question was received concerning time needed on tricky species identification. **Action: RG to reply.**

### **14. Finance (GP) – \*Confidential**