

# Sea Scotland 2018

---

## Workshop report

### Getting communities on board: Tapping into an Invaluable Source of Knowledge, Skills and Inspiring Stories.

*Workshop Organiser: Mario Ray, St. Abbs and Eyemouth Voluntary Marine Reserve*

#### Background

The Sea Scotland Conference 2018 addressed the growing interest and emerging opportunities for empowerment in the management of coastal and marine resources, among communities, and young people as a part of those communities.

Coastal communities have first-hand experience of tackling the challenges that come with living by the sea, their historical ecological knowledge, and a skillset that has been passed down from generation to generation. At the same time, communities of interest are developing, with skills and experience from undertaking sports, a particular industry or other activities at the coast and in the sea.

International drivers, such as the Aarhus Convention (Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters), and the principles of Sustainable Development, recognising humans as a fundamental part of the ecosystem, have set the scene for the involvement of society in decision making. In Scotland, the development of Regional Marine Plans in Scotland, provides an opportunity for communities and young people as part of those communities to take an active role in decision making – but how can we make sure they are actively engaged in the management of Scotland's coastline and seas?

Communities also play an important role in inspiring others. How can we work with them to share their stories and inspire the next generation? An important starting point is understanding how to inspire communities to take an interest in their marine area, and then turn this enthusiasm into action.

#### Workshop overview

In this workshop, participants considered how to tap into the knowledge and experience of communities, discussing experiences of different engagement methods and tools. Two case studies were shared with participants to consider the benefits and challenges of engaging communities. The first introduced an ongoing project to engage local communities in sea cucumber aquaculture in Madagascar. The second demonstrated how a project to involve a coastal community in the management of a local marine area was able to turn disenfranchised individuals into a motivated community. Participants then reflected on how communities can be encouraged to actively participate in data collection and decision making for our seas.

In the second half of the session, participants considered how to inspire future generations. A partnership project between [Project Seagrass](#), an environmental charity, & the Scottish Chamber

Orchestra, that created an interactive learning experience for primary school children about the importance of seagrass, was presented to get discussion flowing. Participants then reflected on their own experiences with the coast, how they became interested in the sea with a view to explore what methods and avenues could be used to inspire more people and future generations in our seas.

### Summary of Interactive activity - Fishbowl Discussion

Participants came together in a fish bowl conversation to share their knowledge and experience of tapping into local and traditional knowledge to create robust and reliable datasets that inform marine planning. The session was started with Alastair Lyndon from Heriot Watt University, Crawford Paris from the Clyde Schools Project and Rhona Fairgrieve from the Scottish Coastal Forum who discussed lessons learned – the good, the bad and the ugly - from their experience in engagement projects. Workshop participants were invited to observe, ask questions and join the circle to develop the discussion. Several key themes emerged from the discussion:

#### *Methods to encourage interaction*

- **Be creative and think outside the box** – Marine Policy and planning can seem dull to many people. Starting with alternative entry points – such as the Arts – can be an effective way to draw a wider range of people in to marine topics. This interest could then be built on to discuss concrete marine issues and encourage action.
- **Tap into the interests of a community** - To inspire and engage people in decision making we need to make communicate in a way that is interesting to young people and communities. For example, a local project on Marine Mammals that is able to communicate with thousands of people from across Scotland based on this mutual interest.
- **Turn interest into action** - Similarly, Blue Planet II has highlighted many ocean conservation issues, it is important now to let people know how they can do something about it.
- **Encourage students** to get involved in Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM) subjects.
- **Get people out to the beach** from an early age is important. Activities such as marine bug hunts, and beach cleans were mentioned.
- **Avoid acronyms!** Making the engagement project accessible to everyone is vital.
- **Get to the point** - being direct and simply asking people what they want is a valuable starting point. Basic exercises that could gather a simple snapshot of ideas from people of all ages and backgrounds were welcomed. Suggestions included asking people in 3 words what they wanted for their local area, creating Wordles (word pictures), post-it note activities, asking school children what they think of their area, and simple online questionnaires. Some participants reflected that online consultation responses, though well intentioned can be lengthy and challenging to understand, and may be off putting.
- **Keep it visual and fun** - Games, such as the marine spatial planning game, can be used to educate kids about their local area and all the factors that affect it.

- **Use your surroundings:** One participant provided an example of how a local river was used to engage people in an estuary management plan. The project took a diverse approach, working with local museum, investing in public arts and promoting historical value of the area. Many communities had been disengaged but saw this as a new way in. A lot of interested was generated by word of mouth.

#### *Methods to capture community interest/views*

- **Visioning exercises** - How do communities view their place in an ideal world? Clyde Schools Project worked with 9 coastal communities to understand what communities wanted their coastlines to be like, how they wanted to use it, as part of the Clyde Regional Marine Plan project. This visioning exercises helped them to understand what the values from each community group, which would help to guide decision-making and understand trade-offs later on.
  - Tips: Setting the visioning exercise in the future was a good way to get people to think outside the box and not be constrained by what they thought was possible or likely. Vital to manage expectations – several participants mentioned the importance of not promising the earth and being realistic with participants. Sometimes visioning can create frustrations if not handled properly. Be ready to be challenged/hear opposing views – not likely to hear diverse range if only asking two people.
- **Turning planning into a game** - The Marine Spatial planning board game, developed by the Scottish Coastal Forum as an education and capacity building tool. It allows participants to trial a marine planning process in an undefined marine area and can be used within national boundaries, or across boundaries. The game allows participants to take on different roles, consider potential conflicts & synergies. A computerised version allows planning authorities to model projected impacts of proposed economic development or environmental protection.
  - Tips: When playing a game the size of the group matters – more players can lead to more detail, less players provides an overview. The results might also differ with the dynamics of the group involved (e.g. single sector or mixed, age etc.), and whether they are facilitated. Adaptable to multiple sectors and variables – added in litter section after strong interest from players.

#### *Existing challenges and thoughts from the floor*

- **What is a community?** Traditional community – might have more tightly bound around some industry, or geographically bound. Now communities are a more fluid concept, could still be a community of place (e.g. coastal or Island communities), but also communities of interest (e.g. Sailing club or college) are emerging. There are opportunities to engage with all these groups, important to reach beyond immediate geographic areas - the outcomes of visioning exercises, games and other engagement projects are likely to differ as different communities involved.

- **What about the hard to reach groups?** Participants were keen to understand how to reach beyond the usual suspects to involve a mix of people in engagement and decision making processes. Lack of time to attend meetings, and also lack of funding to be able to attend or miss a day of work was considered an important obstacle for many. Conversely, others might be able to attend all meetings and could be considered to 'block' wider community interest. Some might already be disenfranchised.

Thoughts from the floor:

- Where possible providing financial support and thinking carefully about timing and location can make it easier and more likely that people will be able to attend (i.e. meetings on weekends and evenings)
  - Start with a conversation - it could might snowball from one interested individual to a wider community.
  - Give people an opportunity – they may not have thought about it before, but could be intrigued.
  - Everyone is reachable if you do it right. We need to ask ourselves who is benefitting and who is it for? Are policy makers easy enough to reach - Do we need to go further to facilitate dialogue?
- **How can we balance the discussion?** Participants discussed how to ensure all participants have an equal voice. Ensuring that a wide range of voices are able to participate and providing multiple ways for people to contribute to discussions, such as meetings, drop-in sessions, online consultations, could help.
  - **Funding for engagement** is a challenge, both to carry out engagement/methods and to support participants to be able to engage. Participants also cautioned that a pot of money does not equal engagement – we still need to be creative, reach out to communities in a meaningful way, be open and build trust.
  - **Ownership marine resources is challenging** - Coastline and marine are constantly moving, and so the concept of ownership is difficult.

Thoughts from the floor:

- We should consider the sea as a unique environment, and not seek to copy processes on land.
  - Communities – of place and interest - should be at the heart of decision making, involved right from the beginning.
  - Meet people where they are and with what they are interested in.
  - Create a space for people to air their grievances. It could even be an alternative project (e.g. creating a public arts mural) that will bring people together. This will provide an idea of what individual and community concerns are. Might not be possible to resolve all the issues but they need to be acknowledged somehow.
- **How can we sustain interest over time?** – Public interest doesn't always follow a political time frame. For example, many people are interested in marine litter now, but how can we sustain this interest and channel it into ongoing processes? Marine planning provides an

important role as a place where bottom up interest & ideas can mesh with top down policy priorities. We need to keep coming up with new ways to retain attention.

Resources mentioned:

- Streamline Research
- MSP Challenge Game
- SCDC website resources
- Public Dialogue – funded by science wise and NERC

### Summary of Group discussion – Inspiring the next generation

Participants were asked to select photographs that exemplified their connection with the coast. By sharing stories, participants explored how they became inspired in the ocean, and discussed ways to inspire future generations. Recurring themes of this discussion are listed below:

- Childhood trips to the beach, primarily with family, were important in creating a connection with the sea. Participants noted that not all families will be interested in the sea, and so other opportunities for people to visit the coast should be supported.
- Educational experiences at the coast, such as school trips, travelling and volunteering (e.g. beach clean surveys) were considered important.
- Participants also talked about a connection across generations – visiting the beach with family, but also re-connecting as adults.
- There were some negative recollections of personal experiences of the sea – for example, water quality was mentioned as a problem, the sea was considered a dangerous place.
- The coast was also mentioned as a place to meet new people and contributed to well-being.
- Sensory connection to the sea – seagulls and waves were mentioned as the sound of the sea, the taste and smell of the sea, as well as the feeling of running along the pebbles were all mentioned as special characteristics, connecting people to the sea.
- Having to ‘visit’ the coast helps to make it more special. Need to strike a balance between discovering more about our seas and them becoming ‘normal’.

Delegates then shared ideas of projects they would like to see to help inspire new generations, and communities to take an active interest in the sea:

- **Ensuring easy and regular access to the beach** through all streams of life, also for those who live further from the coast. Opportunities should be supported through school (either as regular trips or special days out), volunteering (e.g. beach cleaning, wildlife surveys), holidays, water sports and other activities.
- **Mainstreaming marine science into the school curriculum**, and providing support for teachers.

- **Taking the sea to the kids** – for those who live further inland or can't make it out consider creating 'coastlines', 'underwater tunnels', making use of aquariums and existing facilities.
- **Make use of technology** – use existing camera facilities to inspire people, particularly young people and those far from the coast - to take an interest in a marine area or type of marine life with live videos (e.g. webcams of seabird colonies, or underwater hideouts).
- **Using the 5 senses!** The sounds, smells, sights, tastes and feel of the coast and sea to inspire young people.
- **Connecting people across coastlines**, through a system such as pen pals, to exemplify the interconnectedness of the oceans.

## Workshop Programme

<i>Facilitator – Mario Ray</i>	
0915 – 0930	Workshop Introduction
0930 – 1000	Working with coastal communities and engaging them – case studies
1000 – 1045	Interactive group work - Fishbowl conversations. <i>How do we get communities actively involved in data collection and marine planning?</i>
<i>Lunch and outdoor activity</i>	
1330 – 1335	Welcome back and plan for Session 2.
1335 – 1345	Project Seagrass and Scottish Chamber Orchestra case study
1345 – 1430	Group reflections – Sharing stories. <i>What inspired you to take an interest in the sea? How can we inspire the next generation?</i>
1430 - 1440	Group feedback – What is your goal to inspire future generations
1440 - 1445	Wrap-up and close.