Sea Scotland 2018

Workshop report

Getting involved: Approaches to constructive dialogue in marine stewardship

Workshop Organisers: Esther Brooker, WWF Scotland and Emilie Devenport, Scottish Environment LINK

Background

The civil empowerment agenda is becoming increasingly relevant in Scotland with adoption of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Islands Bill 2017. For decision-making in Scottish seas and coastal waters, the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 also mandates a participatory, ecosystem-based approach to management of maritime activities and delivery of conservation instruments, such as marine protected areas (MPAs) and marine spatial plans. Furthermore, with increasing public awareness of human impact on the marine environment, Scottish people and communities are keen to have their voices heard and their priorities included in decision-making processes.

To ensure this is achieved in a democratic way, policy-makers must consider how to best design decision-making processes to enable an appropriate level of fair participation by a representative level of society and relevant stakeholders. This is challenging, not least in the context of limited resources and capacity to do so. What do participants view as successful public engagement in planning processes? What is the preferred level of engagement among participants? What is the preferred method for engaging public views? What are the obstacles to achieving this in Scotland? How can we overcome these? How can the Scottish process learn from this?

This workshop was designed to focus on and promote good practice in approaches to public engagement and participation in marine decision-making through knowledge-sharing and creative thinking. The objectives for the workshop were as follows:
- Explore methods for engaging stakeholders in [marine] decision-making and how they support effective participation;
- Identify good practice and effectiveness of engagement methods through application in case studies and past experience of delegates
- Stimulate creative thinking around new and existing methods for engaging stakeholders and promoting public participation in marine decision-making.

Workshop overview

This workshop was attended by 14 people and led by two facilitators (Esther Brooker, WWF Scotland, and Emilie Devenport, Scottish Environment LINK). The participants of the workshop are summarised at the end of this report. The workshop was conducted with an agreement to use 'Chatham House Rules', therefore no personal references will be made in this report. The workshop was held over two sessions, as outlined in the workshop programme.

Workshop notes

Breaking the ice

Firstly participants engaged in an 'icebreaker': an exercise in 'active listening' in which groups of three were asked to assign themselves roles of 'speaker', 'listener' and 'observer'. The speaker talked for two minutes on a given subject, after which the listener summarised the key points from their speech and the observer offered reflections on their discourse. The purpose of this exercise was to demonstrate the importance of listening and understanding the perspectives of others, which is a key aspect of successful stakeholder engagement. Participants then shared reflections on the exercise. One participant commented that they found it difficult not to ask questions about what the speaker was saying before they had finished their speech.

Setting the context

The context for the workshop was outlined, briefly describing the national and international drivers for public participation in decision-making. These include:

- Rio Declaration (1992): Principle 10
- Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, Aichi Target 5
- The Aarhus Convention
- The Environmental Principles
- The Sustainable Development Goals
- The Ecosystem-based approach

In Scotland, public participation in decision-making is a democratic right of civil society, but there is an increasing drive towards decentralisation, where appropriate, coupled with increasing public awareness of environmental issues, which is encouraging people to seek to be more involved.

A suggested definition of 'engagement' and 'participation' was also presented, with the acknowledgement that these are broadly interchangeable terms.

- Engagement – an active dialogue between authorities and the public
- Participation - indicates input from the public into a process

Some of the challenges of public engagement and participation were outlined, including who should be engaged, i.e. at what point are the interests of the public considered to be appropriately represented in a decision-making process? Following on from this, how can authorities engage people meaningfully and legitimately, managing expectations and ensuring that sufficient support is in place?

Case studies and main discussion

Two short case studies were presented to kick-start a plenary discussion among workshop delegates.

1. CORPORATES ("The Cooperative Participatory Evaluation of Renewable Technologies on Ecosystem Services"), University of Aberdeen. This project developed a support framework for knowledge exchange around ecosystem services in relation to wind farm developments in the Firth of Forth. There were many considerations around involving stakeholders in the workshops, including how to get people there (particularly those who have to take time out of business) and how to make the methodology interactive and accessible. A conceptual model was developed based on the stakeholder discussions that highlighted the social and

2

environmental interactions between ecosystem services. The process emphasised the importance of social learning and helping people to understand policy linkages.

2. Empowerment Framework, Dialogue Matters. The framework looks at different levels of empowerment at the design and planning stages and the implementation and delivery stages of a decision-making process. It highlights what levels of community empowerment might be appropriate in different situations. This has been applied in rural land use and management in Scotland, which suggested that while there are already good examples of engagement there is still some work to do to improve practice by authorities. For marine work, the framework highlights that these processes do not involve full empowerment – generally stakeholders share in the planning stages but delivery is undertaken by authorities.

One person was excited to hear people talking more about 'empowerment', noting that the UN definition of 'deliberation' includes people coming together at an early stage to find win-wins and maximise benefits. Another participant noted that there is no fixed definition of the ecosystem approach and wanted to understand how it can be implemented in a decision-making process. The PICES project (Partnerships Involving Stakeholders in the Celtic Sea Eco-System) was suggested as a good example where 12 principles of the ecosystem approach were developed and subsequently followed up through the Celtic Seas Partnership project, which sought to implement them. An SNH report reviewing methods for implementing the ecosystem approach was also raised, as was a UK-wide review of implementation of the ecosystem approach by the James Hutton Institute. However, these approaches and different pieces of thinking all need to be brought together: what is working well, and what isn't?

A further reflection was that previous experiences of consultations have felt like a *fait accompli*, that a process is just being followed in which stakeholders are told what will happen and, while objections are noted, they have no influence on the outcome. Participants noted that trying to change existing processes is hard, and pointed out that authorities need to be serious about what makes representative decision-making – as not all stakeholder voices feel as though they are being heard. Another participant challenged what 'engagement' should mean in this context.

The discussion then focused on trust as a necessity to underpin stakeholder engagement – influencing how people are brought on board. Participants considered that the building of trust between participants is an iterative process needed for sincerity, ensuring others are heard, creating understanding and building confidence. They reflected that this can be hard as timing – and having enough time - is important, however, time (in the context of a consultation process) and resources are often limited. Participants agreed that relationship building needs to begin at an early stage of the process to foster a sincere willingness to engage as well as help manage stakeholder expectations. Meanwhile, it was considered that authorities need to consider adapting decision-making processes with emerging research and tools to move towards greater stakeholder empowerment.

This session was concluded with a detailed presentation by Dr Gill Ainsworth (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, Edinburgh) about a Marine Ecosystems Research Programme project exploring non-monetary values of ecosystem services in the Celtic Seas using the Community Voice method via filmed interviews. The project seeks to address knowledge gaps on the contribution of cultural ecosystem services to human wellbeing. There are two stages: gaining a deeper understanding of people's relationships with the marine environment, through the filmed interviews, and deliberative evaluation, through multi-criteria analysis stakeholder workshops. The researchers' experience has found that, although some people we initially intimidated by being filmed, it was actually empowering in itself, as their views were being recorded and taken away but they do not necessarily

have to be in the room with the decision-makers. However, they found it could be difficult trying to reach local residents and time constraints prevented them from accessing everyone they wanted.

Key points from participant discussion:
- Most participants do not consider [marine] decision-making processes to be sufficiently participatory in terms of stakeholder/public engagement; this is in part due to the nature of the processes and some consideration should be given to how this can be changed.
- Sometimes the process itself can be more important than the decision (in terms of building trust and relationships). Enough time is needed to allow these relationships and discussions to develop.
- Further thinking is needed on how to access more people more meaningfully in future engagement processes (a useful case study might be the Great Barrier Reef rezoning process: https://panorama.solutions/en/solution/public-participation-strengthen-and-legitimize-planning-processes).
- There are existing processes and methods that we can learn from and apply to the Scottish context.

Designing a stakeholder engagement process

The final part of the workshop consisted of a group exercise to design a stakeholder engagement process for a given scenario – in this case conflict around swimming with dolphin tourism in Hawai'i relating to proposed restrictions on proximity of swimmers to spinner dolphins. This scenario was chosen for its novelty to the participants and because the decision-making process has been documented and analysed (e.g. Wiener, 2009, 2013 and 2015)[1].

The key points from the groups' discussions are summarised as follows:
- **Stakeholders should agree on a shared vision at the beginning of the process** – what do they want the situation to be like in 10 years' time (e.g. a healthy dolphin population). If conflict begins to arise, stakeholders should come back to their shared vision;
- **Social contact is important** – authorities and facilitators should spend time with stakeholders outside formal parts of the decision-making processes to build relationships;
- **The process should be designed in a way to protect stakeholders from starting at a fixed position** to avoid getting psychologically locked into a particular viewpoint and support social learning;
- **Support understanding and relatability of the science** behind the proposals – why has this been chosen and why is it in their interest?
- **Authorities should be prepared to modify the proposals** as needed to accommodate stakeholder needs, expectations and knowledge (within the limits of the relevant legislation and best available science).
- **A wide range of stakeholders will likely need to be involved** (e.g. academic scientists), and should be invited to participate from the beginning.

---

[1] Wiener, C. S., Needham, M. D., & Wilkinson, P. F. (2009). Hawaii's real life marine park: interpretation and impacts of commercial marine tourism in the Hawaiian Islands. Current Issues in Tourism, 12(5-6), 489-504.
Wiener, C. (2013). Friendly or dangerous waters? Understanding dolphin swim tourism encounters. Annals of Leisure Research, 16(1), 55-71.
Wiener, C. (2015). Dolphin tourism and human perceptions: social considerations to assessing the human-dolphin interface. Animals and Tourism: Understanding Diverse Relationships, 67, 146.

Workshop Programme

Facilitators – Esther Brooker and Emilie Devenport	
0900 – 0915	Workshop Introduction with ice-breaker
0915 – 0925	Scene setting
0925-1000	Plenary Discussion
1000 – 1045	Case Study
Lunch and outdoor activity	
1330 – 1430	Group exercise: planning an engagement programme
1430 – 1445	Group feedback, summary and close

Workshop delegates

Affiliation	Number of participants
Environmental NGO	4
Academic professional	2
Independent consultants	2
Marine Planning Partnership	1
Local Authority	1
Government Agency	1
Fishing industry	1
Youth Ambassador (Young Scot)	1
Student	1