

**25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011**  
**Lowestoft**

**East of England  
Regional Hub Meeting 4  
WORKSHOP REPORT**



# 1. INTRODUCTION

This is the full report of the East of England Regional Hub workshop held in Lowestoft on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January 2011. This was the fourth meeting for this particular Hub, and was the third of four that were held during January to cover the whole of Net Gain's East coast area. Further Regional Hub meetings will be held as work proceeds towards detailed recommendations to Government for the location of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in the Net Gain area.

The overall format for the meeting was developed by Net Gain with input from the Stakeholder Engagement Team and incorporated feedback offered by participants at the earlier rounds of Regional Hub and Stakeholder Advisory Panel meetings (StAP). The Regional Hub event included:

## **Day 1 - Full day session**

- ☞ **Welcome and introductions (to all)**
- ☞ **Update presentations**
- ☞ **Natural England guidance**
- ☞ **Introduce map work**
- ☞ **Plenary sharing/walk about**
- ☞ **Final map work**
- ☞ **Site naming**
- ☞ **Next stages**
- ☞ **Work to be completed overnight by the Net Gain team**

## **Day 2 – Half day session**

- ☞ **Welcome and introductions**
- ☞ **Update – what Net Gain did overnight**
- ☞ **Plenary map work**
- ☞ **Next stages**

## 2. NET GAIN BRIEFING

An introduction and briefing on the workshop was provided by Steve Barnard (Net Gain Stakeholder Manager).

The purpose of this round of Regional Hubs was to refine the dMCZs from the 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration, making amendments required to meet the ENG and consider feedback received from the last meeting. It was essential that at the end of this meeting site location, boundaries and features was agreeable so that we could move onto the task of management at the next round of hubs.

The Hub was advised that the format of this hub covering a day and a half was as follows:-

1. Day one – Group work looking in more detail at specific sites, making amendments and looking for reference areas.
2. Day two – Plenary, working through the suggested amendments deciding on which, with wide support, could be carried forward.

### **Project updates**

At the end of last year Net Gain were informed that the RSG were now responsible for making recommendations for the type of management measures to be developed for each site recommended. In order to deliver this additional work Defra have granted a slight extension. The deadline for recommendations is now 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011.

In terms of how the meeting was to be conducted it was also stressed that it was extremely important that everyone should get a chance to put their views across and that delegates should respect other peoples' opinions and give everyone a chance to speak.

The Regional Hub members were thanked for their commitment and support given to Net Gain so far.

### 3. UPDATE PRESENTATION

Steve Barnard went on to give a short presentation outlining what we did with the October Hub outputs, what had been submitted to the SAP at the 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration (and the targets reached by the network of 22 dMCZs); summary feedback from the SAP; feedback from the StAP, and from the NCS group and other stakeholders. Finally, an update of the impact assessment was provided covering the work done to date, feedback received from Defra and the next stages. A copy of the slides used to support his presentation is provided as Appendix 1.



## 4. NATURAL ENGLAND GUIDANCE



The focus of the meeting overall was on finalising dMCZ site boundaries, suggesting reference areas and identifying which features at each site will be the subject of the site's designation. The features identified for designation will help provide the basis for preparing draft conservation objectives which, in turn, will inform debates on management measures in future meetings.

To provide support to this process, Natural England have prepared draft guidance on Reference Areas and guidance on the development of Conservation Objectives.

Hester Clack from Natural England gave a brief presentation on these two areas of guidance, as well as providing a quick overview of the sensitivity matrix work that is being used to help inform assessments on the need for possible management measures.

## 5. MAP WORK

The remainder of the day was given over to map work in groups. The sites were split up between the groups so that in-depth discussions could be held. Each group was provided with the following:

- A site summary table which showed the features of all sites in 2<sup>nd</sup> Iteration report for quick reference;
- A copy of all feedback received relating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Iteration report;
- A summary of all feedback received, split into ecological and socio-economic factors and sorted by Regional Hub and by site;
- A consensus form for each site with information on features present at the site and associated information relating to additional ecological importance;
- Copies of the PRISM/PISA tools to access and interrogate the features/pressures (sensitivities) matrix and the pressures/activities matrix;
- A reference area checklist;
- An adequacy table, showing what targets have already been met and whether we have habitat 'in the bank'; and
- A regional profile with maps showing all available data layers.

For each of the sites that were worked on, the groups were encouraged to:

1. Use the overall site summary table and the dMCZ/BAI map to determine which BSH, FOCI, AAEL and Geological features were present at the site and to develop an understanding of how it compared to other sites in terms of features and overall 'value'.
2. To consider the reference table to identify which features had limited distribution and therefore which needed to be considered for reference areas within this Regional Hub.
3. To consider the feedback on the site.
4. To take account of 1, 2, and 3 and decide which feedback could be considered.

Groups were then asked to review the site, referring to the regional profile for supporting information. In doing so the groups were instructed to:

- Decide if the boundaries could or should be amended (using the adequacy tables provided to see how much of each habitat was 'in the bank' and how much change could be accommodated).
- Record any changes on the site summary table.
- Decide if the site (or part of it) should be considered as reference area (entering an 'R' in the site summary table against relevant features).
- Decide which features the site should be designated for, adding more features if appropriate or removing features, e.g. if not viable (recording these choices with ticks or crosses against each feature listed in the site summary table).
- Make notes of any changes made to features and why this was done.

Hub members were advised that, during the afternoon session, there would be a short 'walkabout' session to allow each group to see the work being done by the others in the meeting.



## 6. PLENARY SHARING AND WALKABOUT



During the afternoon session of the first day, the groups were given the opportunity to move between groups to discuss the work that each of the other tables had completed. However the groups felt that, in general, they could make better use of their time by continuing to focus on their own specific work, leaving wider discussions to the second day.

Some individuals nevertheless made use of the opportunity to sit in on discussions with other groups and to begin to share their thinking.

The main map work exercise continued through the rest of the afternoon session.

## 7. SITE NAMING & NEXT STAGES

Towards the end of the afternoon session, each group was provided with a proforma on which they could record their suggestions of names for each of the sites within the Regional Hub (with a maximum of three options per site). Site name suggestions were collated (to be considered further on Day 2) and the meeting was then concluded with a brief overview of the meeting's next stages.

Hub members were thanked for their work and input to the process and were reminded that comments made during the walkabout session had been recorded. These comments are intended to provide a representation of the ongoing discussions at the Hub and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Net Gain project team. They will be used to help contextualise the outputs from the meeting and to inform discussions in subsequent Hub meetings.

A brief explanation of the work that the Net Gain team would be undertaking overnight was given – this included the digitising of new site boundaries and the review of suggestions regarding reference areas and changes to designated features.

Finally, those Regional Hub members who were unable to return on the second day were asked to complete a feedback evaluation form.

Completed copies of consensus forms were collected. Scanned copies of the forms, with any additional notes relating to discussions around the groups, are presented as Appendix 2.

Day 1 of the meeting was then closed.



## **8. DAY 2 INTRODUCTION & SHORT BRIEFING**



Steve Barnard provided a quick review of the work carried out overnight, together with an explanation of the objectives for Day 2.

The main objective of Day 2 was to review each of the sites considered on Day 1 in plenary, looking at the suggestions that had been made during the previous days group work. It was intended that, through open discussion and debate, a consensus view could be reached regarding any proposed amendments to site boundaries, to suggestions for reference areas, and to any changes to the list of features for which a site was to be designated.

Hub members were reminded that the focus of the Hub reports would be based on group consensus but that additional or alternative views would also be recorded.

## 9. MAP WORK: MAIN PLENARY SESSION

In turn, the sites for consideration were introduced, explaining which table had reviewed it the previous day. The features of the site were looked at and amendments suggested by the group responsible for the site on Day 1 were presented to the larger group. The Regional Hub as a whole was then asked if it could agree to put these sites forward, as discussed, at this stage. Other suggestions and considerations were taken into account, with pertinent comments being recorded. As sites were agreed upon they were 'locked in' and the discussion moved onto the next site for consideration.

A list of prompts (as below) was used to help direct the debate:

- What are the features of the site? What value does it bring?
- What was the feedback on it?
- Was it a reference candidate?
- What could be done to make this MCZ acceptable (e.g. change boundaries, size, zoning of activities)?
- What do those who value this site for ecological reasons think about proposed changes?
- Can the group agree support?
- Are there any alternatives for the same feature which have not been considered?
- Are the impacts too great for further consideration?

The following records the main points raised during this session.

At the start of the plenary discussions RSPB raised concerns about the way of working and the how the prioritisation of sites (effectively focusing in on the two dMCZs from the region) seemed to go against the SAP feedback that additional ecological features have not been taken into account. As a result of focusing in on these two sites, some key principles of the ENG have not been considered either.

### **The following points and comments were raised in plenary discussion for site NG2.01.**

Note - two separate groups were working concurrently on site NG2.01. Discussions of their suggested approaches are presented separately below. Subsequently, the wider Regional Hub discussions and the emergent consensus view are provided.

**Table 1** - subdivided site NG2.01 into four smaller areas: 1a, 1b, 1c and 1d.

#### **Key points of interest:**

- The commercial fishing interests on the group were not comfortable with the original site NG2.01 and attempted to identify alternative areas with a similar level of conservation value but less potential socio-economic impact.
- Site 1a was identified as a substitute for the area of subtidal mud that would be lost should NG2.01 be lost from the network. This site lies within a R3 windfarm zone and in the SE corner of the existing Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC.

- Site 1b is an offshore extension of the original site NG2.01 and it was identified as an example of subtidal mixed sediment.
- Site 1c covered the Orfordness GCR site plus the Alde and Ore estuaries.
- Site 1d covered just the Blyth estuary.
- New information will be available at the next round of hubs on the subject of a cable corridor that will be coincident with the bottom right portion of 1b. Subtidal mixed sediment was checked against the sensitivity matrices and was found to be incompatible with cabling on two counts.
- PRISM and PISA to be checked to clarify compatibility with windfarms. Windfarms representative would like it noted that this sector would be unhappy if site 1b were taken as the only option for the subtidal mud BSH identified in this hub.
- SB reiterated that the ecology has to be the first consideration within the Net Gain process, and takes primary concern over socio-economics. He also reminded the group that socio-economics will be explored and laid out in the Impact Assessment, which is being developed by Enock Bamusi.
- Natural England reminded the group that all sectors' information should be taken into account to an equal degree throughout the process.
- Group questioned as to whether or not the layer of additional ecological importance had been used to find potential MCZs offshore - SB confirmed that it had not, as the selection of these sites had been based primarily on the BSH distribution with the additional ecological importance being a secondary selection criteria.

**Table 2** – retained the basic site NG2.01 but with boundary modifications (the northern boundary moved to the Blyth estuary and the eastern boundary clipped to the 3 nm limit).

In particular, discussion centred on the northern boundary of the amended site and the inclusion of estuaries. Their option, at the end of discussions on day 1, was to reduce the area of the site by moving the northern boundary southwards, whilst retaining the Alde/Ore and Blyth estuaries.

**Key points of interest:**

- An abundance of FOCI was captured by the suggested site.
- There are existing no-trawl byelaws in place across some of the area (effectively reducing potential impacts of site designation).
- Habitat targets for these BSH are met elsewhere in the network.
- Subtidal mixed sediments are present.
- The individual site also covers an important bird foraging area - RSPB wanted a larger site to encompass bird colonies in a large area of sand c.5km x 5km. RSPB reminded the group that SAP feedback says that additional ecological features are of a great importance.
- Noted that a Natura 2000 site already exists in this area, including protection for red-throated divers.
- Commercial fishermen noted that this site would carry less impact if it were located further out to sea. Many sectors would be adversely affected by what is effectively an inshore site.

- MCS noted that by losing sites or whittling them down, we risk losing connectivity. Reminded the group that the presence of an MCZ alone does not imply management measures. He also suggested that smaller zones may imply more stringent controls.
- Commercial fishing representative stated that – “the industry is a mess because of processes like this. There is a lack of understanding about the inshore industry”.
- SB reminded the group that Net Gain is the only process that allows fishermen to sit around the table and actively contribute to and influence the process.
- Commercial fishing representative stated that “it is an unfair situation that the commercial fishing fleet does not have professional representation. Areas will be put forward and the implications identified afterwards. That is why the process is at fault.”
- The group was advised that the cable corridor could be refined to a quarter or less of the existing potential area – this revision will be communicated by the renewables sector as soon as possible.
- Landfalls have been put forward and lie within the Balanced Seas area, but not within the proposed site.
- Group overlaid the aggregates data layer. Natural England noted that when this site was originally drawn up, the boundary was not intended to overlap with the aggregate area – if it appears that way it is due to a slip of the pen rather than an intentional action - this should be corrected when the next round maps are drawn up.
- MCS suggested that the only course of action that can be taken with the aggregates is to know about the areas, they are large areas, and to take them forward as a consideration - but at the moment, until more is known, they cannot be a key consideration.
- Aggregate and renewable sectors suggested that there should be a buffer zone around MCZs
- It was suggested that more consideration could be made of offshore areas, and the future of BAI 1 was raised – but it was confirmed that this site remained just a broad area of interest at this stage. It was also suggested that there may be some room to move this zone’s location, but it was decided that this should be considered when we have reached a conclusion on the other selected sites. Natural England suggested that the south eastern portion of BAI 1 could be amended to include biodiversity hotspot 26 (as recorded within the information on Areas of Additional Ecological Importance provided by the NGOs).
- Natural England pointed out that there was a recommendation from the NGOs to include an area of additional ecological importance (in lieu of ‘blue’ area). It was noted that this ‘blue’ area is very important for fish spawning.
- SB pointed out that the key driver for the Net Gain project, in terms of site identification, should be the Broad Scale Habitats and FOCI – with additional ecological importance providing a means of selecting between alternative sites.
- Natural England reminded the group that the suggested distance between habitat types in separate sites, in line with the connectivity principle, is 40-80km. Natural England also noted that it appeared from discussions that the top portion of this site seemed to have lower contention than the bottom half and suggested that the boundary could be clipped to reflect this.
- Group stated that the boundary had been designed this way to capture as much habitat as possible, but there may be other solutions.

## Wider discussion

- Commercial fishermen noted that the inshore areas would be very problematic for smaller vessels and that often their business is seasonally dependent. It was also noted that the existing MPA (the Outer Thames Estuary SPA, designated for the red-throated diver) already affords this area some protection. MCS reminded the group that areas of management do not necessarily mean that they become no take zones.
- Commercial fishing representatives informed the group that there is a lot of small scale bottom trawling in this area that would be hugely affected by a no trawl zone in this area. Also, it is impossible to chart which areas are important as this changes year on year.
- SB reminded group that the Impact Assessment will be designed to record all concerns.
- Support was expressed for the offshore site 1b by the commercial fishing sector; support was expressed for the inshore sites by the NGOs.
- NFFO requested that the implications for offshore fishing activity should be taken into account should the area around Hotspot 26 be considered further. Natural England believed that there was a general consensus to take this site forward - and noted that that it may be an 'easy win' for the group. Subtidal coarse sediment is present in this area which could make up for (inshore) habitat that would be lost if NG2.01 is dropped from the network or reduced in size – in response, MCS noted that this risks being a gross over-simplification, cannot just lose 'high value' sites of ecological importance.

It was suggested that the new site 'b' (proposed by Table 1) be carried forward; and that more groundwork is done on 'Hotspot 26'. The inshore site (the refined boundary of original site NG2.01 as proposed by Table 2) should be retained and considered further.

- The concerns of the offshore commercial fishing fleet were noted and it was acknowledged that cross-boundary issues and connectivity as they relate to sites in this area will still need to be looked at.
- RSPB noted that they were unaware that the boundaries of site NG2.01 had been modified, effectively losing the northern portion of the site (the RSPB were present within the group that had made this suggestion).
- It was noted that the site NG2.01 was proving to be highly contentious for a number of reasons.
- It was also noted that understanding the condition of a feature will determine the conservation objectives and this will in turn affect the management measures that are needed to provide protection to the features at a site.
- RSPB noted that once sites are removed they are hard to put back in. There are many opportunities to remove sites throughout the process; it is more important to ensure that all sites are discussed fully at this stage and that decisions are made for the right reasons.
- The group requested that, when considering management options for the sites, the possibilities of seasonal restrictions are explored.
- RSPB suggested that there may be benefit in splitting the coastal site NG2.01 into two rather than running in one continuous strip.
- SB noted that it may be prudent to handle estuaries differently due to differences in activities, authorities and environmental concerns. More information is required from the Environment Agency regarding designations in the Alde/Ore estuary.

Consideration should be given to seeking an input from port authorities when nominating estuary location for MCZs. Notwithstanding, the decision was taken forward (with consensus) to locate a separate/distinct dMCZ within the Alde/Ore estuary.

- In addition, and irrespective of the future adoption of the coastal site NG2.01, the Orford Ness GCR site was suggested as being put forward as an MCZ. This was done with the understanding that its designation as an MCZ would not restrict any current activities and the group requested more information on the implications following its designation.

## Conclusions

- Site 1a was put forward for subtidal mud (to replace the area of subtidal mud that would be lost from site NG2.01 should this inshore site not go forward. This new site would be coincident with part of the Haisborough, Hammond and Winterton SAC.
- Whilst data quality and confidence issues are noted at site 1a, Natural England noted that this site would have relatively low contention as there is no windfarm activity, no commercial fishing and no aggregate activity. However, objections to this site were noted from the renewables sector, in relation to cable corridor issues.
- Site 1b should go forward; it was noted by the commercial fishing sector that the offshore site (site '1b') offers the same conservation/ecology benefits as the coastal strip site (the original NG 2.01) but is much less contentious.
- It was originally suggested that the inshore site (original site NG2.01) be taken forward with an amended boundary. However, it is noted that it is HIGHLY contentious and this site going forward through the process getting broad support would be dependent on the management measures put in place there. Advice from the SAP should be sought on the substitution of the original coastal strip (NG2.01) site with the suggested alternatives (effectively 1a, 1b and 1c). In light of this, the coastal strip site (NG2.01) should, at this stage be retained for further consideration, but it should be recognised that it may not be required given that the ENG targets it was originally intended to contribute to may be effectively satisfied by alternative sites.
- A proposed MCZ (site 1c) covering the Orford Ness GCR feature should be taken forward.
- An MCZ for the Alde/Ore estuary should be taken forward – this will need to be refined in terms of location and boundary at the next meeting of this hub. It is noted that the inclusion of an estuary site had good consensus within the Regional Hub. Whether this site is designated separately from the Orford Ness GCR feature or as part of the same MCZ will need to be considered further.
- At the time there was no strong feeling either way regarding site 1d (the Blyth Estuary) but there was a consensus view that it should at least be taken forward for further consideration and not discounted at this stage.
- The BAI in 'Hotspot 26' in the SE of the Hub area should be considered further. This area is adjacent to the Galloper renewables site and a request was made to consider and bring forward comments on the original BAI (BAI 1) from the 2nd iteration (for example the need to consider a 1km buffer zone between MCZ features and active windfarm sites).

- For the record, RSPB again noted that there is a need to continue looking at features of additional ecological importance. Again it was noted that all of the sites in question are contentious depending on the management measures that are put in place.

Overall consensus was achieved, but noting the comments recorded above. Site boundaries will be redrawn as per discussions, reflecting boundary changes recorded on the day.

Going forwards, the separate sites that have been suggested to supersede site NG2.01 will be referred to as NG1, NG1a, NG1b, NG1c and NG1d. The features that these sites would be designated for were agreed as shown in the table below.

Features present within suggested modification to original dMCZ NG2.01	Carry forward for designation in site:				
	2.1	2.1a	2.1b	2.1c Note (1)	2.1d Note (2)
A1.3: Low energy intertidal rock	-	n/a	n/a	-	n/a
A2.1: Intertidal coarse sediment	-	n/a	n/a	-	n/a
A2.2: Intertidal sand and muddy sand	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	-
A2.3: Intertidal mud	-	n/a	n/a	-	-
A2.4: Intertidal mixed sediments	-	n/a	n/a	-	-
A2.7: Intertidal biogenic reefs	-	n/a	n/a	-	n/a
A4.2: Moderate energy circalittoral rock	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	n/a
A5.1: Subtidal coarse sediment	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
A5.2: Subtidal sand	✓	-	✓	-	-
A5.3: Subtidal mud	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a
A5.4: Subtidal mixed sediments	✓	n/a	✓	-	n/a
Blue mussel beds	✓				
Estuarine rocky habitats	✓				
Seagrass beds	n/a				
Sheltered muddy gravels	✓				
Subtidal sands & gravels	✓				
Tide-swept channels	✓				
Tentacled lagoon worm ( <i>Alkmaria romijni</i> )	✓				
Lagoon sand shrimp ( <i>Gammarus insensibilis</i> )	✓				
Starlet sea anemone ( <i>Nematostella vectensis</i> )	✓				
European eel	✓			✓	
Smelt	✓			✓	
Undulate ray	✓				
Benacre Ness	✓				
Orfordness	✓			✓	

See accompanying notes (overleaf)

## NOTES

- (1) Site NG1c to possibly include the Alde/Ore estuary – this to be revisited at next meeting with clarification of feature designations if appropriate
- (2) Site NG1d (Blyth estuary) – feature designations to be revisited at next meeting if appropriate
- (n/a) Feature lost through revisions to site boundaries

### ***Post Plenary comment***

*RSPB wished to add to the record that site NG2.01 contains breeding and wintering grounds for the following species:*

- *little tern;*
- *sandwich tern;*
- *common tern;*
- *kittiwakes; and*
- *four species of gull.*

### **The following points and comments were raised in plenary discussion for sites NG2.02 / NG2.04**

These two sites, both situated on the North Norfolk coast, were largely coincident. Originally, site 2.02 had developed from work at the EE Hub, whilst site 2.04 had developed from work at the LW Hub.

Note – as for site NG2.01, two separate groups worked concurrently on both sites (NG2.02 and 2.04). Discussions of their suggested approaches are presented separately below. Subsequently, the wider Regional Hub discussions and the emergent consensus view are provided.

**Table 3** – focused principally on site 2.04.

#### **Key points of interest:**

- In general terms it was felt that, as site 2.04 was larger than site 2.02, it potentially represented a more viable site.
- It was noted that there is low confidence in the data at this site in particular, owing to the dynamic and shifting seabed off this stretch of coast.
- The designation of site NG2.02 could not be accepted by commercial fishing interests unless potting and shrimping could continue at their current level. It was stated that static gear fishing activity is already depleted in the area and that if potting is restricted the resultant impact on the local commercial fishing industry would be colossal.
- It was recorded that there are currently talks taking place around extending the 3nm no-trawl zone.
- The group used the sensitivity matrices to help assess what the implications might be for potting in the area. Notwithstanding that the actual phrasing of the information from the database suggests that potting would be 'incompatible' with this BSH on two counts, they felt that more clarification will be required as the wording is currently ambiguous and that, in theory, potting should be able to continue.

- Moderate energy infralittoral rock makes up c.150km<sup>2</sup> in site NG2.02 and a further 100km<sup>2</sup> in the additional area covered by site NG2.04. For this BSH the Net Gain project is currently over target by 190km<sup>2</sup>. Therefore clipping the boundary (i.e.losing c.100km<sup>2</sup> of this habitat type) would still satisfy the adequacy target requirement for this habitat in the ENG – and would limit the impact on the commercial fishing industry.
- Due to displacement caused by the windfarm development, there is currently heavy commercial activity beyond the 6nm.
- Noted that there is a contrast between local knowledge and the data currently provided on the BSH in the intertidal area.
- A commercial fishing representative also wanted it noting that he had low confidence in the data that has been provided regarding the feeding activity of terns in this area.
- Zoned management was supported by table 3 as a good option in this area. This would mean that only the features that had been specifically selected for protection should have management measures - under these circumstances, management would only be required 3nm out and beyond. MCS would like it noted that underlying data and local knowledge would not support that suggestion. Maintaining the inner portion makes sense if site NG2.03 is retained as a site by the L&W hub - if not it may require more discussion.

**Table 4** - focused principally on site 2.02

**Key points of interest:**

- The group suggested that the boundary should be clipped to that of site 2.02, as the excess area covered by NG2.04 is effectively unnecessary (with relevant features and habitats already adequately protected by site 2.02).
- Site 2.02 was considered by this table to form part of a 'system' with site 2.03 (which was to be discussed at the Lincolnshire and The Wash hub) with which it forms a natural continuation. It was noted however, that the group had less confidence in the habitat data for the offshore area. It was noted that there is also an existing no trawl byelaw in place.
- The group also looked at the area that is to the immediate west of site 2.04 and within the 3nm zone. This area should, in this table's opinion, be looked at for chalk and exposed clay. The table elected to suggest protecting both moderate energy infralittoral rock and peat and clay exposures in this extension area.
- Another site could be added to the eastern edge of site 2.02 (offshore from Sea Palling) which would cover the blue mussel bed habitat. Whilst MCS noted that they believe blue mussel beds to be present about 500m off the artificial lagoons stakeholders requested that the presence of this blue mussel bed is verified.
- Notwithstanding the request for verification, the group reached a high level of consensus on designating this additional area for its blue mussel bed feature.
- SB noted that the blue mussel beds habitat FOCI is not a prolific feature within the Net Gain area. Stakeholders noted that this is one of the only blue mussel beds that is not currently commercially exploited – however this feature may be transient. In the Sheringham and Wells area, there were formerly four mussel beds, there are now two; this species does die off naturally. There is an active watersports centre at Sea Palling; the positioning of the inner boundary of this site at 500m offshore would provide a convenient buffer against this potentially source of disturbance.

## **Wider discussion**

- It was noted that there is a lack of confidence in the data for this area so the group felt that it was safer to designate for chalk and rock. Again it was stressed that this is a dynamic area with a transient sea bed, and this must be taken into account as the project makes decisions on feature designation.
- It is suggested that different management measures will be identified and put in place for different features. One of the groups working on these sites only elected to protect certain features in order to minimise commercial impacts.
- It should be noted that it was assumed that subtidal coarse sediment is sufficiently protected elsewhere in the Net Gain area.
- MCS would like to note that there is a danger of undermining the ENG; they suggested that systems of protection should be kept strong, especially where there is low data confidence. It is felt by this group that it makes more sense to consider zones as systems rather than to consider specific features in isolation.
- Natural England also pointed out that this area should be considered in exactly the same manner as any other potential MCZs. Again, MCS noted that it important to ensure connectivity, representativity and representation through systems and not to pick out specific features.
- A counter argument was offered when it was stated that, by focusing in on the specifics, certain features can be afforded greater protection from future threats – certainly to a greater extent than if they were protected relatively large ‘blanket’ areas.

## **Conclusions**

- There was good consensus on this site.
- The site should be restricted to the outer boundary of site NG2.02 and should not be extended to cover the proposed NG2.04. Additional ‘extensions’ to the western and eastern boundaries of site NG2.02 should be promoted (covering peat and clay exposures and blue mussel beds, respectively).
- This site should not be designated for highly mobile species.
- All of the geological and geomorphological features coincident with the site should be afforded protection.
- There was low contention at this site as long as existing fishing effort can continue and as long as site NG2.03 is carried forward by the Lincolnshire and the Wash hub.
- Commercial fishing representatives would like it noted that the static gear fishermen in this area believe that, given the existence of the no-trawl zone in the area, their fishing effort and the methods used combine to have a net positive effect on the environment.
- Again it was stated that the seabed is highly dynamic in this area.
- The SAP should be aware that the information which stakeholders have used has been augmented significantly by local knowledge. This has, in general, been used in place of the BSH data (in which they have exceptionally low confidence) in order to attain the position and conclusions reached in these discussions.
- In addition to the designated features at the site, it was suggested that the site could potentially provide three discrete reference areas (for peat and clay exposures, blue mussel beds and for sublittoral chalk – each 500m x 500m). However, it was noted that more groundwork needs to be done on the precise location of these areas and

that sectoral representatives would need to assess the acceptance, or otherwise, of this position and feedback to the group at the next round.

Overall consensus was achieved, but noting the comments recorded above. Site boundaries will be redrawn as per discussions, reflecting boundary changes recorded on the day.

Going forwards, sites NG2.2 and 2.4 will be replaced by site NG2. The features that this site would be designated for were agreed as shown in the table below. In the table, 'REF' indicates where it has been suggested that a site may encompass a reference area for a feature.

<b>Features present within suggested modification to original dMCZ NG2.02</b>	<b>Carry forward for designation in NG2</b>
A2.1: Intertidal coarse sediment	-
A2.2: Intertidal sand and muddy sand	-
A2.3: Intertidal mud	-
A2.4: Intertidal mixed sediments	-
A3.1: High energy infralittoral rock	✓
A3.2: Moderate energy infralittoral rock	✓
A4.2: Moderate energy circalittoral rock	✓
A5.1: Subtidal coarse sediment	-
Blue mussel beds	✓ REF
Littoral chalk communities	✓
Peat & clay exposures	✓ REF
Ross worm (Sabellaria) reefs	-
Subtidal chalk	✓ ? REF
Subtidal sands & gravels	
Starlet sea anemone ( <i>Nematostella vectensis</i> )	-
European eel	-
Smelt	-
Undulate ray	-
North Norfolk Coast GCR	✓
West Runton submerged forest	✓
Trimingham Cliffs	✓

**Notes** The blue mussel bed reference area is proposed for the extension area on the eastern side of site NG2 – the data being mainly local knowledge (diver surveys) shared and discussed with the group.

The peat & clay exposure reference area is proposed for the extension area on the western side of site NG2 – the data being mainly local knowledge shared and discussed with the group.

The possible reference area for subtidal chalk is still to be confirmed – the exact location will make use of local knowledge.

### ***Additional post-plenary comments***

- *Inshore and offshore fishing are of equal importance in these discussions*
- *MCS offered to suggest some additional potential locations for peat and clay exposures*
- *General query - how set in stone are the guidelines for excluded activities in the Reference Area guidance - it seems an overkill. More firm guidance required from Natural England as reference areas could lead to displacement of activity and (unintended) impacts elsewhere.*
- *There was a suggestion from stakeholders that, rather than having reference areas imposed at a later date, it would be better to be prepared and come back to it before meeting again.*
- *Natural England suggested that the suggested blue mussel bed area could easily be taken forward as a reference area, as it was low contention and seems an easy win.*



## 10. AGREED PLENARY MAP OUTPUTS



### **Draft MCZs**

The following figures (overleaf) show the revised draft MCZ sites as suggested by the groups during the map work on the first day (as insets) and as they were agreed to be carried forward following the plenary discussions on Day 2 (the main body of the figure).

The degree to which the network of dMCZs (as agreed post-plenary) meet the requirements of the Ecological Network Guidance (for adequacy, replication, etc.) will be assessed and presented within the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration report to the Science Advisory Panel.



## 11. SITE NAMING 2

Net Gain had taken the site names suggested on Day 1 and prepared a series of large wall charts to allow for voting.

Each member of the Regional Hub was given a set of stickers and they were then asked, for each site, to each place one sticker against their favourite suggested name.

The resulting scores from this exercise are presented below as Table 1.

These suggested names are, at this stage, indicative only.

**Table 1 Suggested possible site names, with indicative support**

Site	Suggested site name	Votes
2.1a	Haisborough Subtidal Mud	2
2.1b	Fishermen's Friend	-
2.1c	Alde Ore Estuary	2
2.1d	Blythe Estuary	-
2.2	North Norfolk Chalk	-
	North Norfolk Coast	1
	Sherringham	-
2.2 & 2.4	Crabs R Us!	-
	Cromer Shoal Chalk Beds	6
Additional portion of 2.2	Blue Mussel Ridge	7
	Sea Palling	-
All sites in EE Regional Hub	Suggest to let local schools choose	7

## 12. NEXT STAGES

The Hub members were informed that, following the full round of Regional Hub meetings, reports for each meeting would be prepared and made available to members as soon as possible.

When they meet on the 7th February, the StAP will look in particular at any cross boundary redundancy remaining and where we are still lacking reference suggestions they will be asked to comment and advise.

The next round of hubs (in April or May) is going to be slightly different as we will need to shift the focus onto management options for the proposed sites. We will be working on a site by site basis to review the features, look at existing management and see what else may be needed depending on what activities occur at the site. To facilitate that work, we will go away and develop a 'vulnerability assessment' for each site – using the features you have defined for the site, and what activities occur at the site we will cross reference with the PRISM database to see which may or may not need management.

Before we do that though, we will need to introduce you to the different types of management options available. We plan to hold a joint session prior to the next round of hubs with the MMO – this will be w/c 21 March. Details TBC.

Completed evaluation forms were collected (the data from these are presented as Appendix 3) and Net Gain expressed their thanks for everyone's hard work over the course of the meeting; all inputs were greatly valued and appreciated.

### UPDATE

Since the Regional Hub meeting the dates for the next round of one day meetings, to be held in conjunction with the MMO, have been confirmed as follows:

- North East Regional Hub – 21<sup>st</sup> March;
- Yorkshire & Humber Regional Hub – 23<sup>rd</sup> March;
- Lincolnshire & The Wash Regional Hub – 25<sup>th</sup> March; and
- East of England Regional Hub – 30<sup>th</sup> March.

The subsequent round of Net Gain Regional Hub meetings have been pencilled in as:

- Yorkshire & Humber Regional Hub – 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> April;
- North East Regional Hub – 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> May;
- East of England Regional Hub – 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> May; and
- Lincolnshire & The Wash Regional Hub – 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> May.

In both instances the venues, timings and intended content will be communicated to Regional Hub members once details have been finalised.

## PARTICIPANTS

The list below includes all invitees. We have also included those who sent apologies; they also will be receiving this report.

Name		Sector	Notes
Elizabeth	Bourke	NFFO	
David	Chambers	Commercial Fishing	
Helen	Chappell	English Heritage	
Hester	Clack	Natural England	
Katie	Critchley	Environment Agency	
Marcus	Cross	Scottish Power Renewables	
Amy	Crossley	RSPB	
Andrew	Finlay	The Crown Estates	
Roger	Hipwell	Commercial Fishing	
John	Hiskett	Norfolk Wildlife Trust	
Gary	Horton	ABP (Lowestoft)	
Iain	Johnston	Hutchinson Ports UK	
Mike	Jones	RSPB	
Adrian	King	Charter Boat Skipper	
Roger	Knights	Yachting	
John	Lee	N Norfolk Fishermens Federation	
Dave	Lock	BSAC	
Darren	Mariott	Trawlerman	
Roger	Mason	Lowestoft MMO	
Bill	Parker	Suffolk CC	
Adam	Pharaoh	Galloper Windfarm Offshore	
Tom	Pinborough		
Roger	Seago	Commercial Fishing	
Hugh	Sims	Lowestoft FPO	
Rob	Spray	MCS	
Doug	Stewart	Gardline Environmental	
Judith	Stoutt	ESFJC	
Ralph	West	Commercial Fishing	
James	White	Felixstowe Ferry Fisherman	
Chris	Wightman	Commercial Fishing	
Jessica	Woo	ESFJC	

In addition to the invited Hub members, the following members of Net Gain staff were present:

- Steve Barnard – Stakeholder Manager
- Dani Sewell – PR & Communications Manager
- Chiara Polce – GIS Planner
- Tammy Stamford – Liaison Officer
- Pete Hansell – Liaison Officer
- Dan Davis – Liaison Officer
- Enock Bamusi - Economist



## APPENDIX 1



### **Net Gain presentation**

The following pages show the slides that accompanied the presentation to Day 1 of the Regional Hub meeting.



## APPENDIX 2



### **Completed Consensus Forms**

The following pages are taken from scanned copies of the completed Consensus Forms for each of the sites discussed during the first day.

In addition, any further notes relating to discussions around the groups are also presented.

Additional comments recorded during the discussions on Day 1 are presented below.

#### **Table 1 – site NG 2.1**

- Draft guidance from NE on reference areas – catch and release angling classified as extractive? Should this be re-assessed?
- Need to know condition of reference sites now to see improvement in future and provide a basis for comparison. Monitoring should happen earlier.
- Ports, shipping, anchorages – would like to lose northern part of NG 2.1.
- Fishing within 30m radius of shore in most of NG 2.1.
- Assumption made that group can omit/lose all habitats met by existing MPAs.
- Support a change of shape for NG2.1.
- Inshore subtidal mud – commercial fishing objections (area scrapped). Moving zone to outside the 6m limit would be preferable to allow for inshore trawling.
- Please can we have information on geological features – what will be protected and do we have to include them or are they additional considerations.
- Tentacled lagoon worm located near Yarmouth – probably not present anymore.
- Seagrass present off North Norfolk – not generally known to be found in areas indicated in NG2.1.

#### **Comments regarding Site NG 2.1A**

- Designated for subtidal mud.
- Avoids commercial fishing activity along Suffolk coastline.
- Objections from wind farms.

#### **Comments regarding Site NG 2.1B**

- Designated for subtidal mixed sediments, moderate energy circalittoral rock, subtidal sand, undulate ray, smelt and European Eel.
- Objections from cables and wind farms – cable route going through the centre.
- Support from commercial fishermen.

#### **Comments regarding Site NG 2.1C**

- Orford Ness (Geological feature).
- Estuarine MCZ.
- Designated for tentacled lagoon worm, lagoon sand shrimp, starlet sea anemone, European Eel, Smelt, Undulate Ray, Estuarine rocky habitats, blue mussel beds.
- Slight objection from recreational sea anglers and potentially fishermen working in the estuary.

#### **Comments regarding Site NG 2.1D**

- Designated for European eel, undulate ray, smelt, subtidal mud, fish spawning area.
- Estuarine MCZ.
- Advice from SAP? More information needed.
- Known to be a productive area and relatively few activities take place in this activity. Suggestion based on local knowledge as to which features present and which activities are occurring there.

### **Table 2 – site NG 2.1, initial observations**

- Border already in line with SPA
- Because of no trawling activity, the site has got barren, and sublittoral reef is developing at the north end of the site
- Area 3-6nm off Lowestoft very important for dover sole
- A lot of socio-economic activity in the area, especially Renewables, Fishing, Aggregate interests, Recreation, Cables and Pipes.
- Wrecks in the area.

### **Table Decisions**

- Cut the site down to 3nm, but still consider the 3-6nm area
- What is left after cutting:
  - 50km<sup>2</sup> subtidal sand
  - 15 km<sup>2</sup> subtidal sand sediment
  - 30 km<sup>2</sup> subtidal mixed sediment
- What is removed:
  - 50 km<sup>2</sup> subtidal sand
  - 40 km<sup>2</sup> subtidal coarse sediment
  - 40 km<sup>2</sup> subtidal mixed sediment
- Happy with the north and south boundaries, site cut down to 3nm, and to follow 3nm limit
- Black 3nm boundary agreed
- Site comes inland to include all estuaries to mean-high water spring
- Site important for bird foraging
- Coastal area important for recreational sea angling, e.g. Orford Ness is very popular over summer months.

### **Table then considered following observations:**

- Site is already covered by an existing MPA, why designate it as MCZ?
- Recreational sea angling concerns – request to move site 300nm offshore
- Renewables / Cables concerns

### **And so:**

- Moved top boundary to middle estuary

### **Other Observations**

- If the ENG requirements are met, then the Renewables sector would like a corridor to be left for cables within the MCZ site.
- May be possible to break down the MCZ into estuary corridors, but how to do this needs to be considered further.

### **Level of Support for Site**

- Low consensus (1)
- Medium confidence in the underlying data
- High contention/potential socio-economic impact

### **Table 3 - general comments**

- Please put corresponding colours on all charts in the future
- More specific discussions around activities must take place after the zones are designated

### **Table 3 - Site 2.2**

- Important for foraging birds e.g. herons
- Low confidence in underlying habitat data
- Existing no trawl zone in 3nm limit
- Very important chalk habitats
- Seabed changes dramatically and rapidly in this area
- Taking a purely habitat based approach continues to be frustrating
- Important potting and shellfishing areas
- Checked PISA- Potting ok in Subtidal coarse sediment but not moderate energy infralittoral rock
- Stakeholders suggest that this area is mostly sand
- Question as to why we are concerned about protecting chalk anyway (it is believed that there is chalk in this area)
- Information has come to late all the way through this project
- Shoreline Management plan should be looked at for more information on this area
- Definitive answer needed on the question of fishing rights and the Magna Carta
- Potting in moderate energy infralittoral rock area of 2.2, if limited, would have a massive socio-economic impact
- Potters would argue that potting has a positive environmental benefit- sea creatures have grown used to feeding on the bait that is used in pots and juveniles are thrown back
- More information required from Natural England on surface abrasion pressure benchmark- as this is the only factor that is unclear and would prevent the current levels of potting to continue- according to the sensitivity matrix
- Assumption that zone can go forward if potting can continue
- If potting were discontinued, tourism would also be hugely affected
- It was noted that there is also some trawling activity in this area

### **Site 2.4**

- Stakeholder wished that subtidal coarse sediment area in north of zone is clipped out so that it avoids Sherringham Shoal windfarm development
- Straight lines in data- suspicions, low confidence in data
- Checked matrix- windfarms and cables would be incompatible with the Broad Scale Habitat that we would be seeking to protect
- Geological features and FOCI are protected by existing boundary
- 2.4 went into SAC so boundary clipped to the original boundary of 2.2
- Clipped to 3nm limit to make, management, enforcement and monitoring easier

**Group decided to merge sites 2.2 and 2.4 and amended the boundary. It is of paramount importance to note the assumptions that have been made as a result of checking the matrices**

#### **Table 4 – site 2.2**

- Agreed that the Eastern and outward boundary of 2.2 is ok
- Agreed that the Western outward boundary should be extended to the Western end of the ESFJC closed area – along the 3nm and further west- on the condition that this area is not included in 2.3 (tb discussed at the LW hub)
- Southern boundary of 2.2 to be extended to include the mussel bed coordinates have been given to Chiara by Rob Spray

#### **Consensus**

- Consensus for the Western boundary extension is agreed within the group.
- Some members of the group do not fully agree with the requirement to extend the Eastern outward boundary
- There is no consensus within the group for a reference area- a reference area was put forward by the MCS but the representative for the North Norfolk fishermen could not agree with this proposal as this is prime lobster fishing ground. Remaining members of the group are in favour of a reference area but remain mindful of the socio-economic considerations
- Graham Pickett stated that he was not in favour of a reference area within the present or proposed extended areas of existing MCZ 2.2- due to the fact that wider stakeholders would be affected
- The group believed that the ref area conditions list should be reconsidered on an area by area basis because some of their activities on the prohibited list could be compatible in some reference areas
- Within 2.2 for the shallow shipwrecks it is recommended that there is a net (fishing net) exclusion zone and that there should be no removal of artefacts by divers etc
- Blue Mussel beds now included in 2.2
- Peat and Clay exposure- no removal of peat by humans

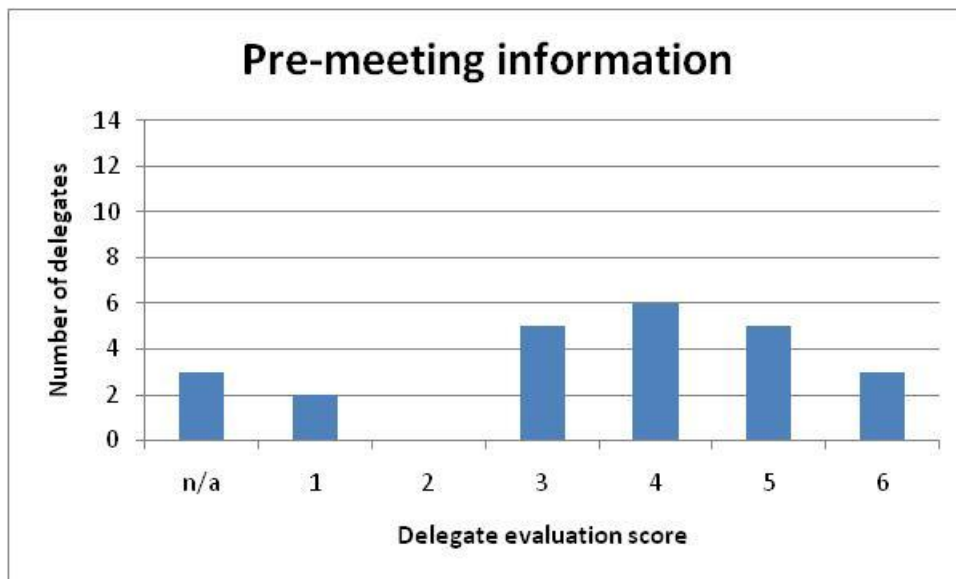
## APPENDIX 3

### Feedback & evaluation

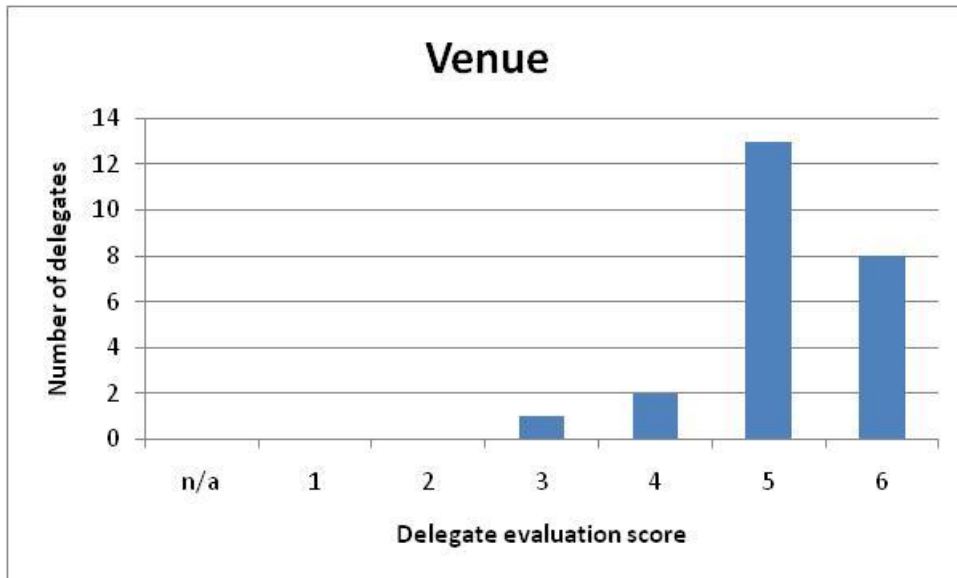
The following figures show the results of the feedback/evaluation questionnaires that were completed by Regional Hub members following the meeting. Where specific comments were received these are presented under the relevant figure (the comment is preceded by the score that was given by the respondent).

Each question/section was rated on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 was 'poor' and 6 was 'excellent', and feedback was requested in a number of areas:

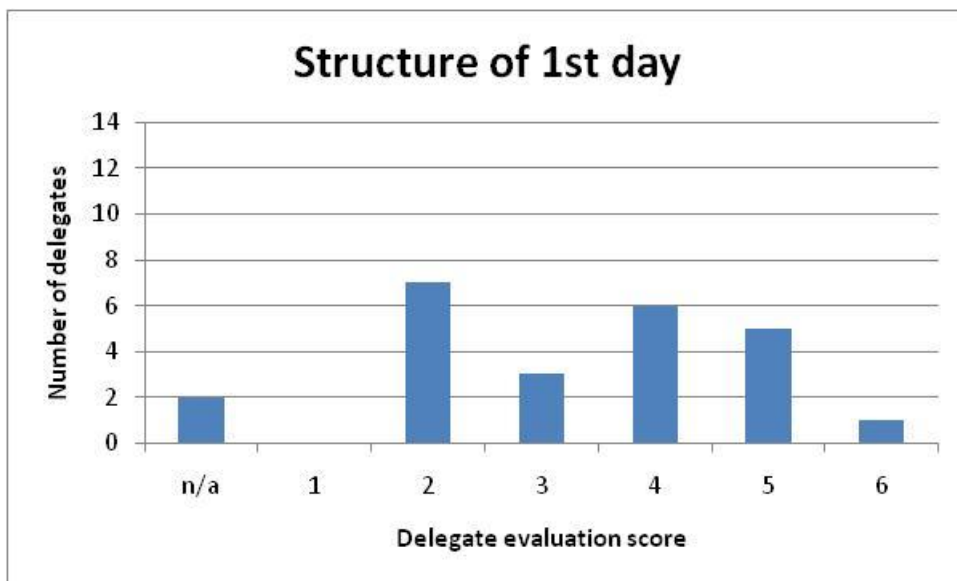
- Pre-meeting information
- Venue
- Structure of 1<sup>st</sup> day
- Structure of 2<sup>nd</sup> day
- Explanation of tasks
- Quality of resources
- Clarity on progress made to date
- Progress made on the day
- Collaborative group working
- Opportunity to discuss your sector's views
- Net Gain support on the day
- Clarity on next steps to be taken
- How well was the meeting run overall?



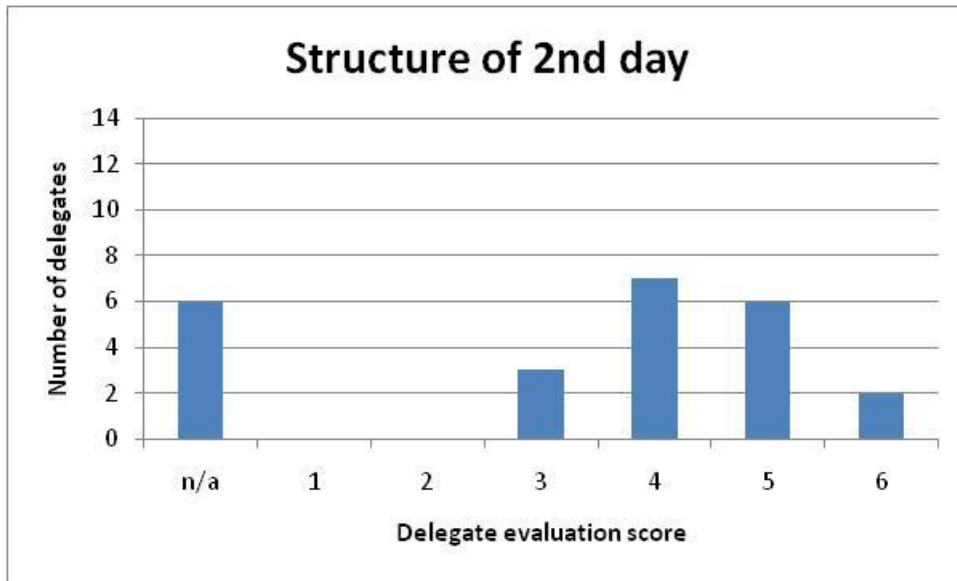
- (1) RSPB not included on distribution list - discussed with SB, aware will be recopied  
(1) Very little info and short notice of meeting. Would be good to know the purpose of discussions.  
(3) Wwebsite is not user friendly  
(5) Reading list for newcomers  
(n/a) No info in advance



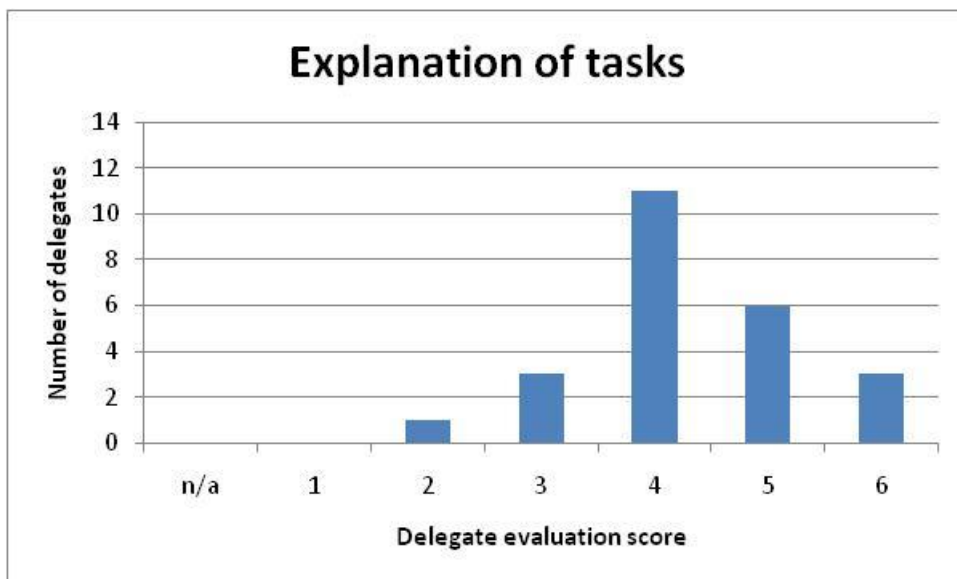
- (3) Long distance for me and there are only 2 trains out of Lowestoft & both meetings were timetabled to finish so left early or long waits
- (5) Poor acoustics difficult to hear some quiet comments



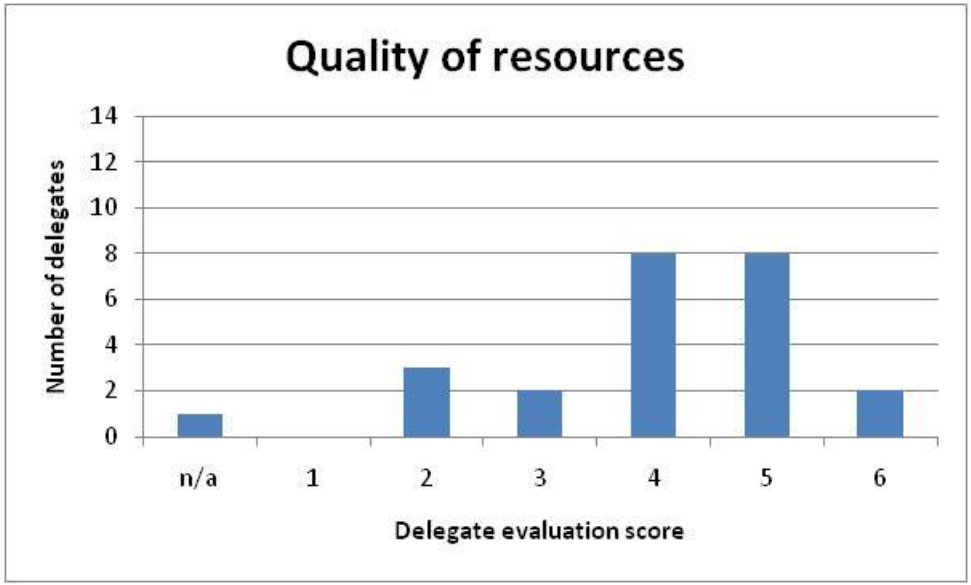
- (2) Concerns re detailed focus on 2 sites, limited opportunity to consider new data on AA EI & revisit BAIs
- (2) Firmer direction at the tables would have helped. Proposed process on screen but only loosely followed
- (2) Frustrating process
- (2) I was late
- (2) More emphasis on the whole suite of network design
- (2) Site division v rigid contentious BAIs from last round not covered
- (5) Some stakeholders didn't understand the history of the process
- (n/a) Could not attend



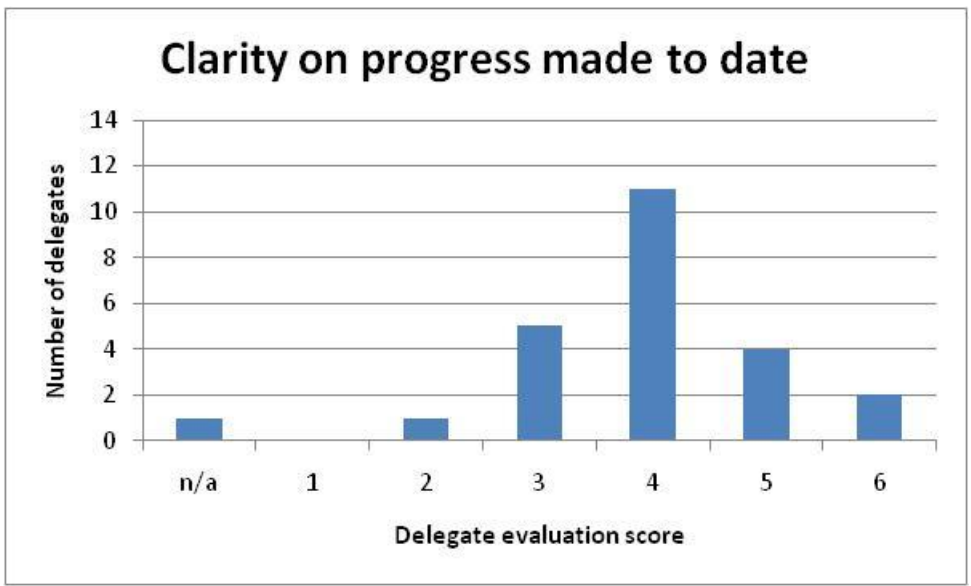
- (4) Better having large group discussions
- (4) Plenary is useful format
- (5) Prompts were needed not just on representativity
- (5) Well held together despite some conflicting views
- (n/a) N/A

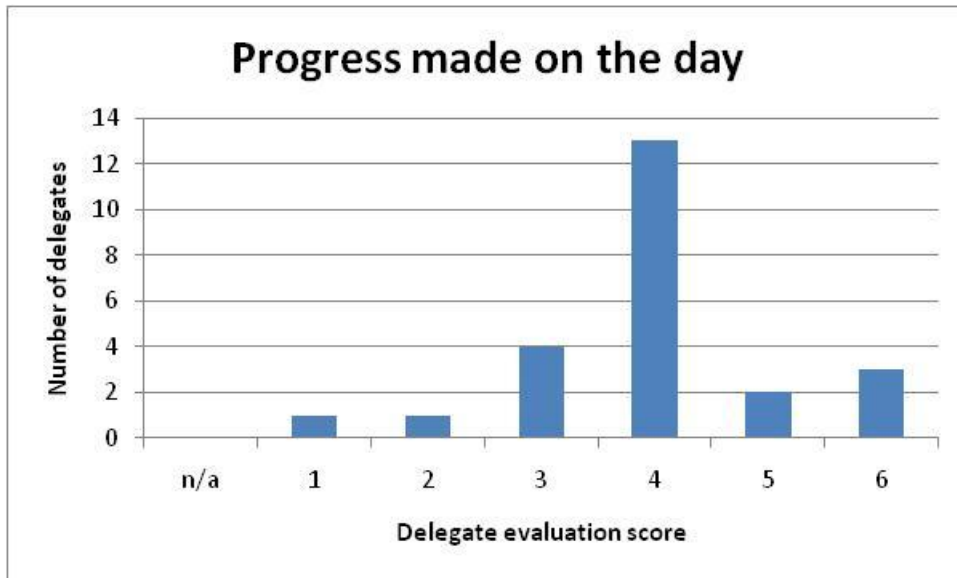


- (2) Not clear. We should have this explanation pre-meeting.
- (4) Only issue - not knowing that 2 tables working on same site
- (4) It wasn't clarified that 2 tables were looking at each site so after 2 hours of debate on our table then we realised other options also being looked at. This was really demoralising! Meant day 2 plenary was equally difficult for Suffolk sites

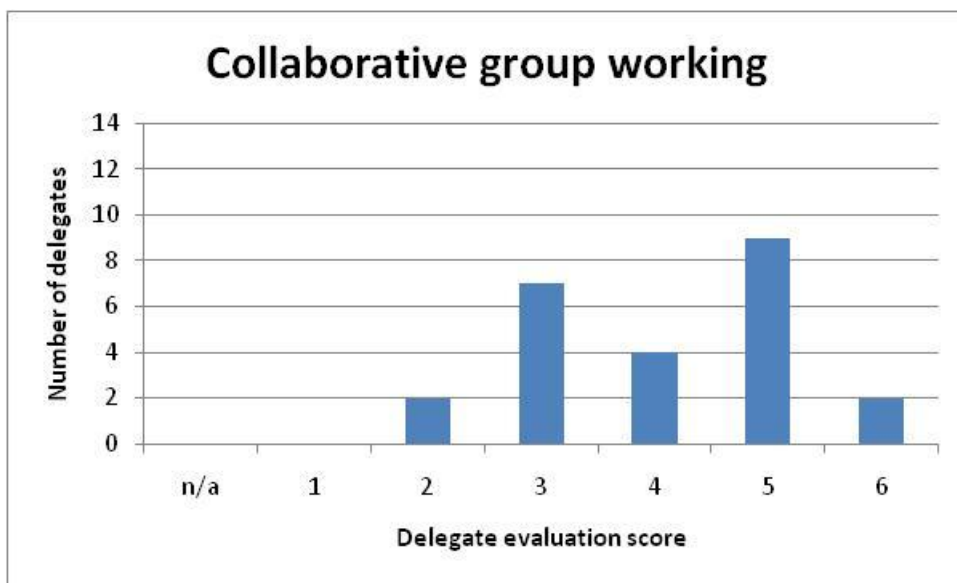


- (3) Some info used in deciding what to do in dMCZs group had little confidence eg extent of chalk beds NG2.2/2.4
- (3) Not working projector.
- (4) (caveated - re data quality)





(4) Could have been more if some stakeholders understand the areas

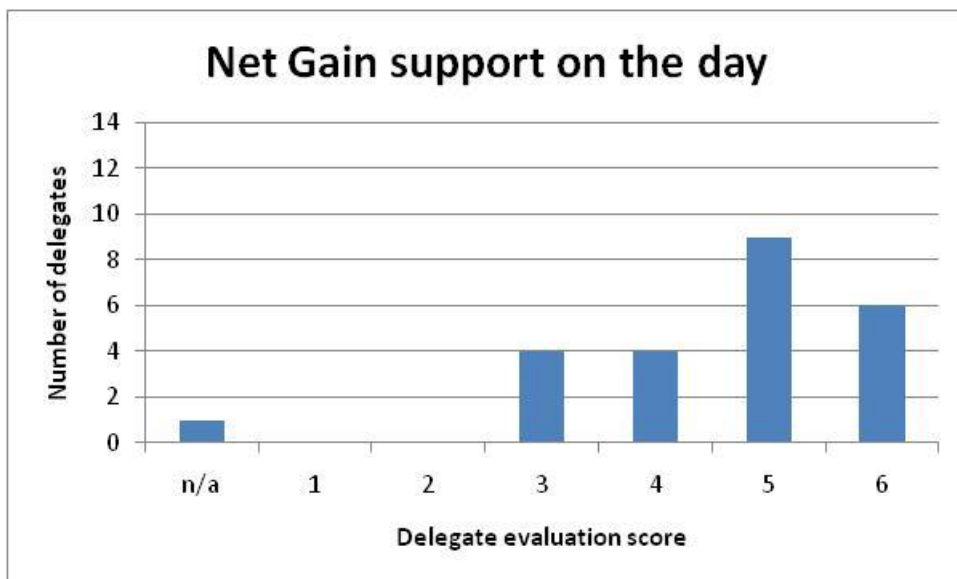


(3) Some issues persist re long winded discussions of issues not entirely relevant



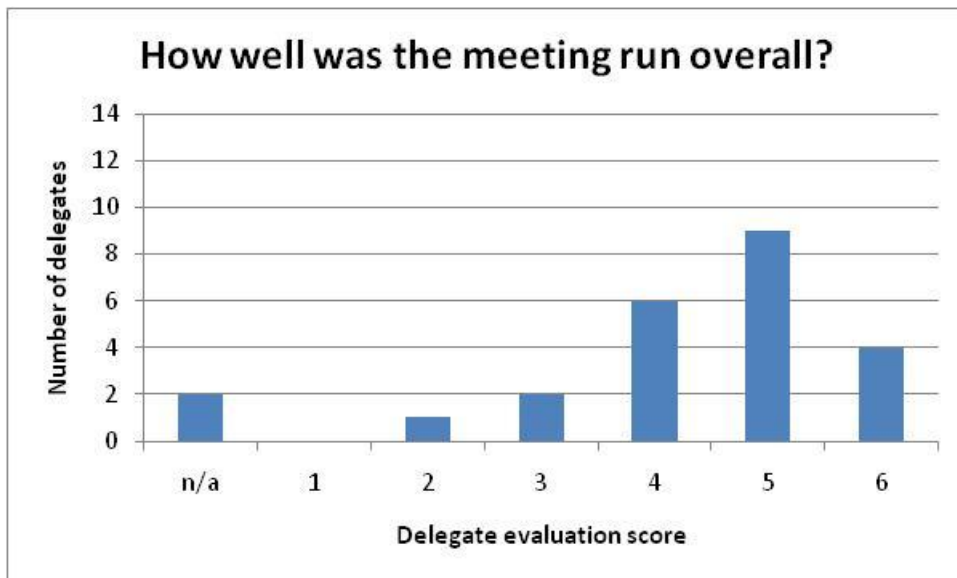
(4) Links to above concerns but plenary day are adequate opportunity to air these

(4) Good from stakeholders, less good from NG staff. Some genuine concerns are stifled.



(3) Comments from a number of people that steer from NG officers could have been stronger to help stay on task but help always on hand when requested

(3) Some people = excellent, couldn't be better. Others = patronizing



(2) Again, same comments as "Net Gain support on the day"

(n/a) Key issue of lack of understanding/discussion of measures to be in place by activity by habitat type