

## **Report of MDIP DAC working group activities – 01 March 2006**

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This brief note outlines the progress of the DAC working group since its inception, together with an action list. The top level aims of the DAC WG are: identification of data types and allocations (i.e. which DAC is “responsible” for which data type within MDIP); resolution of conflicts, overlaps and gaps; provision of advice on best practice; and documentation of standards currently in use.

The DAC Sub-group was formed along with those for metadata/standards and mapping during the first half of 2005. A list of suggested activities/draft work plan was drawn up and circulated by Mike Cowling in May 2005, together with an initial membership list. The membership has since been revised and an updated list is attached (Annex 1).

Initially Dave Morris volunteered to act as Chair for the first 6 months. During this time he produced a strawman document for comment. There was vigorous debate on this with numerous comments from most members of the sub-group; so much so that a new document was produced. This also received some comment, and was discussed further at the MDIP meeting on 3 October.

At this meeting, the DAC working group meeting was chaired by Juan Brown, as Dave Morris was only able to join the meeting for the very end. Although there was still some detail to be worked on such as data quality assurance, the overall DAC plan was agreed. This now needs to be written and disseminated throughout MDIP. Since 3 October Steve Wilkinson has expanded the document. Subsequently further progress has been made, but the document is not yet finalized.

It was agreed that Lesley Rickards should discuss with the potential DACs what they are willing and/or able to do and consider potential overlaps in activity. She is chairing the DAC sub-group for this next phase.

It has been agreed to develop pilot projects based on three existing DACs (UKHO, MBA/DASSH, BODC and BADC) to assess problems and what the implications really were for data providers. Note that this requires discussion with BADC to check that they are willing to participate – and also discussion with the Met Office to identify overlap and gaps. The first phase will comprise UKHO, DASSH and BODC, and the potential second set of DACs will comprise BADC, Met Office and BGS. There is also a need to identify which themes/areas are not being handled. Discussions have been held with the first three potential DACs: the new DASSH (funded by Defra for an initial four year term), UKHO and BODC.

### **Current DAC WG action list:**

- Finalise document – based on DAC list of requirements – with Steve Wilkinson, by mid April
- Complete revision of document, in collaboration with DACs (pilot and potential) – by mid-May
- Continue discussions with DACs, including comparing ‘Requirements’ against their current operation
- Produce list of potential DACs, overlaps between them and gaps
- Discuss with next set of potential DACs whether they wish to be involved

By end of June

- Agree approval process for DACs
- First three DACs to have provided information against requirements and approved
- Publish DAC present practice
- Make standardised metadata available describing DAC data holdings

By end October

- Discuss with next set of potential DACs whether they wish to be involved

By end of December

- Second set of DACs approved – repeat above steps

## **Brief draft description of DAC data coverage for pilot projects:**

### ***British Atmospheric Data Centre (BADC):***

BADC is NERC's Designated Data Centre for Atmospheric Data. Its data holdings include atmospheric and meteorological data, including model output. Some Met Office data is also available. BADC is a partner in NERC DataGrid.

### ***British Oceanographic Data Centre (BODC):***

BODC's data holdings cover many types of marine data, including physical, chemical, biological (e.g. plankton, benthic, and maybe marine mammals in the future), air/sea interface, sediment, geophysical data). It acts as NERC's Designated Data Centre for marine data, but its data holdings extend beyond NERC. For example, other data holdings include the National Tide Gauge Network data, UK Argo float data, national moored current meter and CTD data banks. It also holds a back-up copy of SAHFOS CPR data archive. BODC acts as a National Oceanographic Data Centre (NODC) within the IOC-IODE system. It is a partner in the NERC DataGrid project.

### ***Data Archive for Seabed species and Habitats (DASSH) – MBA/MarLIN/NMBL:***

This is a new DAC funded by Defra, initially for four years. The DASSH will build upon the extensive data and dissemination skills of the *MarLIN* team alongside the experience of the NMBL and the MBA's historical role in marine science. DASSH will house marine benthic data and its associated physical and images datasets. Proposed data includes benthic survey data, benthic images and video, ROV image data and side scan sonar data. DASSH will have two main components: firstly to build an archive of electronic data and secondly to lead to the establishment of a physical archive within the NMBL. DASSH will build on the progress on accessing seabed biological data that has been made in the past six or seven years particularly with the establishment of the UK National Biodiversity Network (NBN) and the MBA's Marine Life Information Network (*MarLIN*), which provides a marine node for the NBN.

### ***UKHO – National Hydrographic Database project:***

Data coverage is hydrography (e.g. bathymetry, morphology, sediments, etc.). Note: UKHO also holds XBT data plus non-civilian water column data. It acts as the NODC for XBT data in the UKHO and periodically provides releases of these data to the wider community through BODC.

## **Annex 1: Data Archiving Centre (DAC) Sub-group Activities and Membership**

### *Draft Workplan*

(Time line deliberately omitted at May 2005, to allow discussion and general agreement re. possible rate of progress.)

#### **ACTIVITIES**

1. Discussion and agreement on Terms of Reference for the (sub) Group.
2. Discussion of Group membership and identification of possible additional members.
3. Agreement on identity of Group leader and modus operandi of Group.
4. Identification of data types/ classes for which suitable DACs need to be identified.
5. Confirmation of DAC 'Requirements' characteristics
6. Study of potential candidates for accredited DACs within the types / classes identified, analysis of strengths and weaknesses, gaps, overlap etc.
7. Dialogue with potential DACs re. willingness to be involved, ability to fulfil the requirements, etc, etc.
8. Recommendations re. list of designated DACs
9. Approval process? 'Kitemark'? Agreement?
10. Dissemination of recommendations to government departments, agencies, NGO's, private sector, etc
11. Monitoring and updating process.

**Mike Cowling**  
May 2005

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#### **Data Archiving Centres (DAC's) Sub-Group Membership**

Lesley Rickards, MED Coordinator (Current Chair)  
Dave Morris, CEFAS (initial Chair, until October 2005)  
Kevin O'Carroll, DTi  
Michael Rose, EA  
Bill Turrell, FRS  
Steve Wilkinson, JNCC

Juan Brown, BODC  
Colin Graham, BGS  
Jon Parr, DASSH/MBA/MarLIN  
Peter Wright, UKHO

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## **Annex 2: Requirements for MDIP DACs**

### **Marine Data & Information Partnership (MDIP) Data Archiving Centres (DACs)**

#### **Introduction**

One of the strands of activity under the aegis of the evolving Partnership is to agree on the requirements for Data Archiving Centres and then to identify a list of appropriate organisations that will fulfil this function in a coherent manner, as part of the future strategy for increasing the value and use of marine data in the UK. The 'Requirements' are designed as a simple check-list of characteristics which, taken together, will ensure a basic profile of adherence to (compliance with) best practice.

#### **Requirements:**

- adherence to eGIF and appropriate international principles
- data collection according to defined quality principles and accepted procedures
- quality assurance of the collected data
- databasing and banking with appropriate metadata standards
- auditable process for long term custodianship and updating of data sets, with appropriate disaster planning
- making datasets freely available wherever possible (not necessarily at zero cost)
- committed to raising awareness of the holdings
- committed to advising 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisations collecting similar types of data on procedures, and providing data-banking (warehousing) and curation facilities for such similar data from other sources
- committed to promoting the use of the data
- committed to, and focus on, customer service
- generally exhibiting evidence of expertise and a track record in the scientific area of the data
- committed to return of data holdings to originators, or lodging with an alternative and suitable repository, if the DAC becomes unsustainable

*December 2004*