

Workshop report from ‘Reviewing the use and accessibility of Marine Data across Government and Industry’ held at IMarEST on 5th November.

Background

A review completed by the Inter Agency Committee on Marine Science and Technology (IACMST) in 2006 suggested there could be a greater involvement of the industry sector in national marine data initiatives. Colin Grant (BP) agreed to provide leadership and formed a steering committee which recognised the need to improve the use and accessibility of marine data across government and industry and decided that a workshop to discuss these issues would be the most productive way to take the issue forward. The workshop was held at IMarEST on 5th November 2007 and aimed to give background to current data initiatives, identify applications which would benefit from an improved coordination between industry and government sectors, highlight current problems that are limiting the exchange of data and propose how improvements may be made within the Marine Data and Information Partnership (MDIP) framework.

Delegates from industry organisations from the oil and gas sector, environmental consultancies, port authorities and a number of industry associations were present (see appendix). The meeting was organised as a series of presentations and then breakout groups that discussed specific topics and then reported to plenary. The presentations are available on the MEDAG website at http://www.oceannet.org/medag/reports/IACMST_reports/iacmst_reports.htm This document aims to give an overall summary and highlight recommendations to be taken forward.

Data access issues and recommendations.

During the meeting it became apparent that there were 3 main types of industry data:

1. Data taken to satisfy government legislation or licences (eg. Food and Environmental Protection Act)
2. Health and safety or environmental data taken for ‘in-house’ requirements which may be released under agreement/licence
3. Exploratory information that is commercially sensitive but may become available in time

1. In the instances where data is taken to satisfy legislation or licence conditions, it is often difficult to discover information about the data itself, and its wider accessibility, as the data often remain with secondary contractors. For the project MESH it was found that these data were difficult to release from secondary contractors due to ownership and issues over what the data may be used for. However, it was found that by approaching organisations through an oversight association (eg. British Marine Aggregate Producers Association, Oil and Gas UK) that the data were more likely to be released.

Recommendation 1. Involve and make better use of industry associations (BMAPA, BWEA, CLA, Oil and Gas UK) to provide input to marine data initiatives.

A similar situation whereby data were not discoverable or accessible was also happening in government organisations when work had been subcontracted out. For both of these situations it was recommended that external incentives should be set up (licence conditions and better understanding of need to manage data) so that data be released from contractors and contracts are only signed off once the data had been submitted to a Data Archive Centre.

Recommendation 2. Progress the inclusion of a data clause in licence conditions for government contracts and raise awareness that these licences should only be signed off once data had been submitted to a MDIP DAC.

2. In the instances where data had been taken to satisfy in-house requirements it may be possible to release the data under license. Any release of data it is hoped would be to a DAC. A data access model such as that employed for the project SIMORC (System of Industry Metocean data for the Research Community) could be used which had been used to provide availability to BP, Shell and Total metocean data: The figure below shows the SIMORC data access model.

Users	Scientific Users	Non-Scientific Users
Restriction		
Data sets labelled: LI = Available under licence	Direct access	Request forwarded to owner
Data sets labelled: RS = Restricted	Request forwarded to owner	Request forwarded to owner

3. Exploratory information that was commercially sensitive such as oil, gas and aggregate reserve information. It is hoped that this information may become available once it had become less sensitive.

Other issues associated with the management of data were the lack of clearly defined standards, formats and guidelines to manage and archive data within the MDIP framework. It was very clear that the industry representatives would welcome such standards and guidelines and that they are happy to, and should be involved in defining them.

Recommendation 3. Collaborate with industry partners within MDIP to build standards and guidelines for the management and archiving of data.

Recommendation 4. Once established ensure that the guidelines and standards are well advertised within the industry community

It was clear that the industry sector did not generally feel that the government departments were taking a strong enough lead and influencing data management practises. In particular the impact of devolved administrations on providing a clear unified voice was a concern.

Looking at access of government data by industry it was clear that a lack of a clear unified data access policy across different government departments was confusing and in some cases inhibiting the reuse of data. In particular, the trading fund model was found to be restrictive although there was acknowledgment that some funding must be secured to manage and update information. There were however some minority instances where industry had to pay and agree licenses to use the same datasets at a frequency less than the datasets are updated.

Recommendation 5. IACMST to discuss the need for a unified data policy across government in conjunction with outcome from MIA study.

The value of data – an industry view

The priority of factors which go towards industry evaluating if additional data is of use within specific projects was presented. It was established that the impact that the data would have on solving the problem and also the geographical scope of the data was an important contribution. The ability to discover and immediately get access to data was an important factor. The usability of the data (i.e. how much formatting was required for use) was in fact a low priority which suggests that if a data set is fit for purpose then resources would be provided to convert the data for use. Clear licence conditions, evaluation metadata, a geographic definition and an ability to have direct access (i.e. via internet) are therefore important requirements to ensure that data is easily discoverable, evaluated and usable.

Recommendation 6. MEDAG/MDIP to consider the above needs in future plans for access to data.

Data collation for the calculation of socio economic uses of the sea.

It was estimated in 2000 that direct marine activities contributed 4.9% of UK GDP. This study is being updated in 2007, and is funded by The Crown Estate, Oil and Gas UK and ABP. The study broke down marine activities into 18 categories to calculate the contribution of each to the economy and also subjectively assessed the accessibility of the economic data within each category. Data on the contribution of the oil and gas sector to the UK economy were easily accessible from the Office of National Statistics every year

whereas data from other sectors such as tourism, renewable energy and transport and ports were not readily accessible and indirect estimates had to be made.

The UK Marine Monitoring Assessment Strategy (UKMMAS), Productive Seas Evidence Group (PSEG) have to provide assessments that require these and other socio economic data to satisfy the needs of the objectives of the group, however the above suggests that these data may not be readily available at present. The Office of National Statistics new categorisation may go some way towards improving the accessibility of some of this marine economic data in the future however it is very unlikely that it will satisfy all needs.

Recommendation 7. In coordination with D. Pugh and PSEG, MEDAG should consider making recommendations on how to improve access to marine economic data.

Coordination of resources (ship-time)

It was recognised that across government and industry, specific sectors or groups were coordinating their monitoring and research activities. For example the Committee on Shipping Hydrography (COSH) meeting in February 2008 will aim to integrate hydrographic work programmes (seabed surveys) with the MCA to provide efficiency savings. In addition MEDAG already provides many links to research cruise and vessel information via its webpage and also information on scheduled cruises via the Cruise Summary Report database accessed through BODC. It was felt that although there were 'pockets' of coordination there was not one overall body or framework taking a lead role and that this may be an activity for MEDAG/MDIP or the proposed Marine Monitoring Organisation in the future.

Recommendation 8. MEDAG/MDIP to consider developing the Research Cruise and Vessel Information webpage further to meet user needs.

Conclusions

The main conclusions from the workshop were:

- MDIP is the established framework for UK and further enthusiasm and 'buy-in' was gained from both industry and government sectors
- The industry sector wants further instruction on standards, management and archiving of data and should be involved in such activities.
- There is a requirement for a unified data policy across government (eg BERR and DEFRA)
- There is no centralised industry voice but much coordination in sectors and associations eg. BMAPA, Oil & Gas UK

- The benefits of sharing data should be promoted directly through to the industry associations and government groups (eg BMAPA/UKMMAS)
- There is a further role for resource coordination within MEDAG/MDIP

Annex 1 – Agenda and delegate list

Marine Data: Who needs it? Who has it?

Reviewing the use and accessibility of Marine Data across Government and Industry

5th November, City Conference Centre, 80 Coleman Street, London.
<http://www.cityconferencecentre.co.uk/>

9.30 – 10.00 Registration and Coffee

1st session: Background and relevant management initiatives

10.00 – 10.15 General Introduction and Objectives of the day: *C. Grant (BP)*

10.15 – 10.35 UKMMAS and Productive Seas Evidence Group Objectives: *M. Cowling (The Crown Estate)*

10.35 – 10.55 The Marine Environmental Data Action Group and The Marine Data and Information Partnership: *D. Cotton (MDIP)*

10.55 – 11.15 An Industry Perspective on needs for Marine Data:
MetOcean/Coastal/Renewables: *Chris Hutchins (HR Wallingford)*

11.15 – 11.40 Coffee

2nd session – Specific examples of projects that have considered industry and government data and identified issues in the accessibility and use of that data.

11.40 – 12.00 System of Industry Metocean data for the Offshore and Research Community (SIMORC): *Lesley Rickards (BODC)*

12.00 – 12.20 Assessing the Importance of the Sea to the UK Economy: *David Pugh*

12.20 – 12.40 Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund: *Mark Russell (ALSF)*

12.40 – 13.00 Mapping for European Seabed Habitats: *Natalie Coltman (JNCC)*

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

3rd Session – Breakout Groups

14.00 – 14.15 Preliminary Plenary Discussions. (Confirm breakout topics and groups).

14.15 – 15.30 Breakout Group Discussions:

Identifying the needs for data that cut across industry and government sectors – are there commonalities? If so what are they?

Identify past and current challenges to the exchange of data between industry and government.

Propose the best mechanism(s) to improve the exchange of data between government and industry in the future.

15.30 – 16.00 Tea

16.00 – 16.45 Plenary feedback and discussion

16.45 – 17.00 Summary and Close.

The organising committee gratefully acknowledges the provision of the meeting rooms for this event by IMarEST – <http://www.imarest.org/>

Annex 2. Delegate list

	Name	Organisation
1	Claire Brown	ABP Marine Environmental Research
2	Richard Newell	Marine Ecological Surveys
3	Colin Grant	BP
4	Mike Cowling	The Crown Estate
5	Mark Charlesworth	MEDAG
6	Dave Cotton	MDIP
7	Lesley Rickards	BODC
8	David Pugh	Marine Consultant
9	Mark Russell	British Marine Aggregate Producers Association
10	Natalie Coltman	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
11	Garry Dawson	UKHO
12	Stuart Lowe	MarineSpace
13	Jon Parr	Marine Biological Association
14	Mark Norton	Defra
15	Geoff Bowles	Defra
16	John Pinder	Port of London Authority
17	Mike Osborne	SeaZone Solutions
18	Caroline Whalley	Defra
19	Rachael Mills	Defra (MFA)
20	Matt Harrison	British Geological Survey
21	Robin Stephens	BMT Asia/Pacific
22	Mark Calverley	Fugro GEOS
23	Chris Hill	GeoData Institute
24	Rizwan Sheikh	Shell Exploration & Production
25	Malcolm Fleming	Common Data Access Ltd.
26	Jon Turton	Met Office
27	Vanessa Forbes	Health and Safety Executive
28	Nick Ashton	Met Office, London
29	Bob Greenfield	BT
30	Rob Spillard	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
31	Glenn Richardson	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
32	Adam Leonard-Williams	Met Office
33	John Davidson	Metoc
34	Chris Hutchins	HR Wallingford
35	Bev MacKenzie	IMarEST
36	Peter Kershaw	CEFAS
37	Anna Sargeant	Defra (MFA)
38	Dylan Todd	Scottish Natural Heritage

Breakout Groups

Breakout Group 1	Breakout Group 2	Breakout Group 3
Mike Cowling – Chair Jon Parr Mike Osborne Mark Calverley Garry Dawson Chris Hutchins Nick Ashton Robin Stephens Bob Greenfield Caroline Whalley Geoff Bowles Vanessa Forbes	Colin Grant - Chair Lesley Rickards Mark Russell Chris Hill Dylan Todd Peter Kershaw Glenn Richardson Jon Turton Richard Newell Malcolm Fleming Matt Harrison Rachael Mills Anna Sargeant	Claire Brown Mark Norton Dave Cotton Natalie Coltman Rizwan Sheikh Rob Spillard John Pinder Adam Leonard-Williams David Pugh John Davidson Stuart Lowe Mark Charlesworth Bev MacKenzie

Topic for discussion:

1. Identifying the needs for data that cut across industry and government sectors – are there commonalities? If so what are they?
2. Identify past and current challenges to the exchange of data between industry and government.
3. Propose the best mechanism(s) to improve the exchange of data between government and industry in the future.

Each Breakout Group will discuss all 3 topics but are expected to concentrate discussions and report back to plenary on one topic each. Breakout group 1 will report on topic 1; group 2, topic 2; group 3, topic 3.

On reporting back to plenary, all groups will have the opportunity to add to discussions on all 3 topics to ensure that all points of view are recorded.