

## **Notes from the UKTAG GEP Stakeholder Workshop – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2007**

All presentations from this workshop can be found at the following link  
[http://www.wfduk.org/st\\_workshops/](http://www.wfduk.org/st_workshops/)

### **Introduction and Classifying Ecological potential**

Martin Marsden from SEPA gave an introduction on the day and explained the process of trialling within the sector groups that has been progressed over October and November 2007. He explained that the feedback which we receive today and up until Christmas will feed into the trialling process, the ecological potential report and the classification process of Heavily Modified and Artificial Water Bodies which will take place next year.

Peter Pollard from SEPA explained how ecological potential would be classified.

#### **KEY POINTS FROM DISCUSSION**

- How GEP would be classified with favourable conservation status. As some water bodies are designated as Natura 2000 sites which could quite possibly achieve Natura status but fail GEP. The key message was that the most stringent standard applies.
- Would an abstraction in a HMWB prompt a licence review? This would depend on the abstraction related to the HMWB use.
- There was discussion about the definition of the wider environment and if a structures of national and historic interest then would be looked at under wider environment. Energy use was highlighted as part of the wider environment
- The question was raised as to where chemical status comes into this, it was confirmed that this process only looks at physical modifications.

### **Water supply & Hydropower – Session A**

#### **KEY POINTS FROM THE DISCUSSION**

##### **1. WIDER ENVIRONMENT**

What is the definition and extent?

How is built heritage included?

How far beyond the water body is it taken, e.g. considering energy use and the global environment?

##### **2. HOW TO ASSESS IF MEASURES ARE WORKING**

What assumptions have to be made to decide if a measure is working? If a measure is present do we assume it is working, unless there is evidence to show that it is not? Or do we assume the opposite and that it is not working unless there is evidence to show it is? Do we in fact know how to assess the success of some measures? There needs to be consistency in how this is judged.

### **3. DEFINITION OF USE**

This will vary between sectors. How is use balanced over a national requirement or a sectors responsibility? Should it only consider the water body being classified?

Clarification: The final classification of an example water body (Allt Doe) is based on the use. i.e. there is a measure which can be applied and it has been considered *not* to affect the use thus the water body is not at GEP. If this measure was considered to have a significant adverse effect on the use the water body would be at GEP.

### **4. UPSTREAM/DOWNSTREAM EFFECTS**

If a measure could be taken in an adjacent water body which may improve the water body being classified a note should be made in the spreadsheet. Cross reference to these linked water bodies should then also be made.

### **5. IMPOUNDED LAKES/LOCHS**

The mitigation measures used in the water supply/hydropower classifications only included those related to this use. Other impacts on ecology that are present have not been considered, such as those relating more to the lake itself. These may include concrete structures around the lake margins reducing the habitat. How will artificial/mostly artificial water supply reservoirs be classified?

### **6. WATER BODIES WITH MULTIPLE USES**

How are complimentary or conflicting measures, impacts and uses to be assessed?

### **7. PRACTICALITIES OF IMPLEMENTING THE CLASSIFICATION PROCESS?**

How will it work practically, and how soon will it be set up?

Speed is important; this is the first pass that will be improved over the future planning cycles. Designation criteria need to be built into the classification to simplify and direct the process.

Experts with both knowledge of the classification process and the water bodies are needed. The classification needs to be learned/taught before beginning (training needed) NOT just seeing the spreadsheet blind. This needs to be started ASAP. A lot of people may want to be involved in the classification, this issue needs to be managed and not taken too wide.

RBMP liaison panels/area advisory groups may have resorting issues for full involvement in the classification. Suggestion: to manage the classification process-water bodies with question marks (i.e. not classified in the first pass due to either disagreement or lack of information) could be submitted to the relevant organisations or groups for input to resolve these issues. The classification can be reported in the draft plan including options where no agreement can be reached for comment from everyone. The process can be open ended. The practicalities of time and money will govern how far we go in the first pass at the classification.

### **8. RELATING THIS CLASSIFICATION APPROACH TO THE ECOLOGICAL QUALITY ELEMENTS**

In the trial certain fish are specified but no other specific references are made to other species for example macrophytes. All of the ecological elements are assessed through the impacts of the pressures and the measures, even if not specifically referred to. The impacts considered at that water body should include the impact on all of the ecological elements. The measures are intended to change the water body depending on what needs to be done ecologically.

Surrogates for ecology are being used, for example flow regime. This is not a perfect method. Further work is required and planned to link GEP to ecology and pressure impact relationships.

## **9. FUTURE CHANGES IN CLASSIFICATION**

Clarification: If a water body is classified as GEP in the first round, but with better information it is re-classified in future as below GEP to avoid failing the no deterioration objective it has to be shown that this is due to an initial lack of knowledge, not an ecological problem.

## **10. SMALL HYDROPOWER SCHEMES**

If a water body is designated for hydropower the measures used in the larger scheme examples could apply at the smaller scale.

## **11. COMPARISON WITH EUROPE**

How does the method compare with other European countries? There is no formal inter calibration for GEP, but the process are quite similar across the EU and should compare quite well.

## **Navigation and Flood Risk Management – Session B**

### **1. PRACTICALITIES OF IMPLEMENTING THE CLASSIFICATION PROCESS?**

There was general consensus on the process, but there was also discussion relating to the large number of water bodies involved and whether given the timescales involved; was it a process that could be done.

The ports selected preliminary trials on the basis of ports already up to speed with the Water Framework Directive. A further test will occur in the next trials to see how successful they are when people who have limited knowledge in the process apply the trialling.

There are different reasons for water bodies being heavily modified, is it realistic to think that all people can be got together in the same room? It is recommended as local knowledge of water bodies key to following through the process effectively. It was agreed that expert and local assessment will be important. Need a process for handling multiple uses and Expert Groups/ Sector Working Groups.

There was general concern that there is comparison with what other Member States are proposing.

Transparency issues were raised:

- Ambition not challenging enough
- Avoid focus on discounting up front in classification.

### **2. DEFINITION OF USE**

There is a strong case for breaking the adverse impact of use and the environment separately to clearly identify reasons for discounting a measure.

### **3. REASON FOR DESIGNATION**

In the FRM talk it was highlighted that some water bodies achieved GEP for FRM but really they were Heavily modified for development from riparian ownership and legacy issues. Local Authority responsibilities need to be taken into account in this process in addition to the IDBs. Certain pressures not covered by the existing sectors were identified, including riparian ownership.

#### **4. DISPROPORTIONATE COST**

All infrastructure has a life, there will always be a renewal process.

#### **5. DELIVERY**

Timescales for the process will be key. Confirmation of timescales requested by the sector.

#### **Afternoon discussions**

1. Take a precautionary approach
2. This process should be led by the regulators
3. Environmental NGOs have a role to play in assessing impact on use
4. Communication is vital within stakeholders groups and throughout the sector organisations
5. Need to get the majority of water bodies correct (rather than a few 100% correct and the rest wrong)
6. Is the weight of evidence approach appropriate?
7. Further research is required to look at the hydromorphology – ecology links and relationships
8. Monitoring GEP is important to detect the biological responses
9. Need to ensure that the maintenance/active management that results in good ecology continues.
10. Timing of the classification process
  - when can it begin- competent authority need to take lead
  - need to use the best info we have now
11. Communications plan required to engage the many organisations involved ASAP
12. Training in the GEP process is required
13. Preference that expert panels to perform the classification include the operator and regulator
14. What is the role of the liaison panels and area advisory groups? It may be difficult to get full involvement, but in some cases representatives could be involved in the classification process
15. Water bodies with similar pressures/impacts can be done together to streamline the classification process, as long as the classification is ultimately reported on a water body scale. Where relevant the grouping of water bodies should be done now to speed up the process.
16. Important to try and get the involvement of organisations not yet engaged e.g. local/regional government and MFA
17. Significant adverse effect on use should be an affect on the product or service (not the cost).
18. Proportionality of the impact from different sectors/users of a water body should be considered, this will be taken into account at the measures appraisal stage.
19. Powers and legislation to ensure measures are implemented may be lacking