

ESRC CASE PhD STUDENTSHIP 2006-2008 IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NATURAL ENGLAND

**An analysis of partnership approaches to achieve
strategic marine conservation objectives and of the
perspectives of different actors on such approaches**

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Overview

- Introduction and Explanation of Session
- Background to the Project
- Aims and Objectives
- Methodology
- Preliminary Findings
- Feedback

Background to the Project

- What is a CASE PhD?
- The project was put together by Peter Jones to follow up an earlier project conducted by Peter Jones and Jacquie Burgess in 1999:

“An evaluation of approaches for promoting relevant authority and stakeholder participation in European Marine Sites in the UK”

Jones P.J.S. and Burgess J. (2005) Building partnership capacity for the collaborative management of marine protected areas in the UK: a preliminary analysis. Journal of Environmental Management 77(3), pp 227-243.

Methodology

Research Strategy

- 50 actor centred semi-structured interviews
- Participant Observation:
 - Scientific Advisory Group meetings North East Kent EMS
 - Training course for facilitators run by Dialogue Matters
 - Management Group meetings The Wash and North Norfolk Coast
 - Advisory Group meetings The Wash and North Norfolk Coast
 - The Wash Eider Duck Public Inquiry
- Analysis of documentary sources

Practice!



Overall Perspectives on the EMS Designation

- The overwhelming majority of stakeholders I spoke to supported the designation and thought it had had a positive impact on the area.
- Furthermore, many of the stakeholders felt that it was more prestigious to have a European designation than a national one.
- Historically there had clearly been significant conflict in both areas but the vast majority of issues appear to have been resolved.

“It sends out a clear message to everyone that it is an important site and that it needs to be looked after”.

“I think it has raised awareness amongst stakeholders. Previously a lot of people did not realise how important the site is. It has opened up a lot of local people’s eyes to the wildlife which is in the area.”

“I think the fact that we have the European designation is great, it elevates the site into division one and gives it a certain amount of status.”

The Management of EMSs

- Although very few people objected to the designation they were not always as positive about the management of the site. The main criticism was that there was too much talking and not enough action on the ground.

The Management of EMSs

- Although very few people objected to the designation they were not always as positive about the management of the site. The main criticism was that there was too much talking and not enough action on the ground.
- There was considerable support for the awareness raising activities and initiatives such as the incident reporting scheme. However, the popular perception is that the enforcement of the legislation is virtually non-existent.

“There is a lot of paper work and no action, there is no one out there policing it, especially at weekends.”

“No one does anything at all. Natural England is just like a quango. Yes there is a need for protecting things and reserves, and Natural England are quite happy to talk about it but nothing is ever done.”

Management Scheme

- Virtually everyone I spoke to agreed that the management scheme was essential for the management of the site.
- Furthermore, many respondents argued that the Action Plans were particularly useful and the most important part of the schemes:

“It makes it clear who is responsible for what and what activities you need permission from Natural England for. The action plan is useful as we have clearly defined actions which we can refer back to and monitor our progress annually.”

- However, many respondents added that they thought the schemes were far too bureaucratic and inaccessible to the vast majority of stakeholders:

“...it is very bureaucratic and as a consequence some of the locals have not grasped the influence they have had, that influence is buried in the bureaucracy and they can't find it.”

Governance

- A number of stakeholders on The Wash and North Norfolk Coast argued that there were too many partnerships; EMS, AONB, Estuary Strategy Group.
- Several local authority representatives commented that they were funding three partnerships all doing very similar things and the administration of three separate partnerships was both time consuming and expensive.
- A number of local stakeholders seemed confused and unsure about what all the different designations meant and the responsibilities of the different partnerships.

Discussion – Designation, Management and Governance

- Is there a difference between what is happening on the ground and the perspective of stakeholders?
- Are they really as bureaucratic as some stakeholders think?
- Do they have to be so bureaucratic?
- Could they be written in a more user-friendly way?
- Are they flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances?
- Could the sites be managed in a more joined up way?

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

- It was very clear from the research that stakeholders want to be consulted and that the processes which have been put into place as a result of the EMSs, although not perfect, are far superior to anything which has gone before.

“...people who live here have a very powerful sense of ownership over the area. They have worked it for many years and their ancestors have worked it for as long as they know. Previously that was never acknowledged so EN might bring in some new scheme to do this or that and never thought to ask the people who lived there. When they did it was very condescending, it was not proper consultation, it was very cosmetic.

However, the EMS is different, because it had that paragraph written in at the beginning that the people who live, work and play in the site had to be represented and have a legitimate voice. As a result this has panned out differently. I think this is the first time I have been involved in anything where the locals could and have had a real impact on the outcome.”

The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Advisory Groups

- Positives

“I think the advisory group is a very good and important tool and forum for all bodies concerned with the management of our coast line to actually be able to meet and discuss thoughts, ideas, plans and objectives. If NE have a wizard idea about something they want to do at least everyone can be informed and knows what is going on at an early stage. If it does impact on fishermen, people sitting in a office in Peterborough may be completely oblivious on that form of impact, they can be made aware of it rather than the ball rolling too far in the wrong direction.”

“I like the set up, we are an active group and we are considered important by the management group. I don’t think we are just there to pay lip service to. What the advisory group says is paid attention to because it does contain people who represent bodies which use the site. Most of the members of the group have a vested interest and I’m the only lay person who does not have an interest except that I live here and value the environment.”

The Wash and North Norfolk Coast Advisory Groups

- Problems

“The trouble is getting people to come. That’s always the problem with these kinds of things, people either think oh no this is not for me and they don’t necessarily see their little problem important in the grand scheme of things.”

“The biggest problem is getting people to come, they are not really interested unless they have a particular problem or something is interfering with their interests.”

Engaging with the fishing industry

- Problematic from a research perspective as well as for the management of the sites.
- Concerns amongst people involved in managing the sites regarding the difficulties of engaging with commercial fishers:

“The Sea Fisheries Committee were there putting forward the opinions of the fishermen. The sea fisheries committee worked hard to put across the perspective of fishermen, but this may not have been the same as having people from their own interest groups.”

“One of the key affected groups is the fishing industry. I think this is one area we need to adjust so we better fit the needs of local people.”

Engaging with the Fishing Industry

- Some explanations from the fishing industry:

“The trouble is with a lot of fishermen, is they do this job because they are loners and to stand up and be counted, they don’t like it. When I used to go home and complain, my misses used to stand up and scream ‘cause she is that type. But it even wore her down in the end.”

“Well there has not been a lot of interest from our members because it does not really have a big effect on us and they are more concerned with earning a living.”

“It isn’t something which the fishermen are really concerned with, they just want to catch fish and go home. One of the things with fishing is the quotas are decided by other scientists and bureaucrats, they feel they are not really listened to and are told what to do, so when someone comes along with something else, they are not the most responsive, they have a very strong ‘leave me alone’ attitude.”

Discussion - Engaging Stakeholders at the Right Level

- Stakeholders want to be consulted on issues which affect their local communities and environments.
- However, they generally don't want to get bogged down in bureaucracy.
- Consultation exercises have to be tailored to their needs; several fishermen commented that NE project officers get paid to go along to these meetings, we get paid to catch fish.
- As well as the formal consultation arrangements the project officers are making considerable headway in raising awareness amongst local stakeholders about the value of the coast line.
- Many local people regularly engage with coastal warden schemes, shore search and other coastal activities but don't necessarily get involved with the formal consultation exercises.
- Overcoming communication barriers with the fishing industry.

Local Knowledge

- Conflicts between ‘local knowledge’ and ‘scientific knowledge’ appeared to be one of the biggest causes of tension between local stakeholders and managers.
- There appears to be a perception amongst fishermen and other user groups that their knowledge of the area and experience is not taken seriously. In many cases this appeared to be the primary reason they were unwilling to engage with the EMS.

“I’m 67 years old and when you get to my age and you get some guy who is 22 or 23 telling me what goes on and what should happen in The Wash it’s a complete insult. I’ve been out there, done it, seen it. All his assumptions are out of a text book and these are the people controlling things. They just don’t have the expertise, if they were to say can I come and talk to you about this and we can both put our arguments forward that’s fine, the point is there is no arguments they just say this is what’s going to happen take it or leave it.”

Local Knowledge

“I don’t think NE are in tune with the way things are on the ground. I believe they should employ more local people rather than bringing academics in. I am a strong believer of local knowledge, these people have lived here a long time, they know the area well and have done for generations. There are generations of knowledge in the community. I am concerned about government bodies, they have not got their feet on the ground.”

- Importance of employing local people
- Importance of spending time on the ground engaging with local people
- Managing disputes between scientific knowledge and local knowledge

Discussion – Local Knowledge and Social Capital

- How can local knowledge be used most efficiently?
- What can be done to resolve discrepancies between Local Knowledge and Scientific Knowledge?
- How can science be communicated to Stakeholders?
- How can stakeholder involvement be more inclusive?