Jersey Ramsar Advisory Group (JRAG) meeting minutes

19th October 2026, 18:00 (St Helier Yacht Club)

Attendees:

- Chairman (AM)
- Constable of Grouville (Gr)
- Earth Project Jersey (EPJ)
- Écréhous Residents Association (ERA)
- HM Receiver General (RG)
- Jersey Marine Conservation (JMC)
- Jersey National Park (JNP)
- Jersey Ramsar Management Authority (JRMA)
- National Trust for Jersey (NTJ)
- Natural Environment (Land Resource Management) (LRM)
- Natural Environment (Marine Resources) (MR)
- Société Jersiaise (SJ)
- JRAG administrator (Admin)

Guest speakers (non members):

- Lead Engineer for Coastal Engineering (CE)

Apologies:

- Aspiring Island Geopark
- Constable of St Helier
- Constable of St Martin
- Jersey Kayak & Walk Adventures
- Jersey Seafaris
- Maîtresse Île Residents Association
- Ports of Jersey

Agenda items

1. Welcome

AM welcomed attendees and outlined the agenda and speakers.

He explained that the PoJ representative was unable to attend, so their presentation on EyeSea would be postponed until the next meeting. MR explained that EyeSea is a global NGO building a database of marine pollution, as well as supporting community events, such as beach cleans. EyeSea has an app and website.

2. Approval of minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th March 2026 were unanimously adopted.

3. JRMA update

JRMA presented brief updates on:

- Inter-Island Environment Meeting (IIEM) 2026 -

    - This was held in Guernsey, 30th September to 1st October, and included a short but productive workshop for Ramsar managers from the Channel Islands, Isle of Man (IoM) and France (covering the Baie du Mont-Saint-Michel Ramsar site) exploring potential collaborations.
    - The monthly Channel Island Ramsar meetings were formalised and also expanded to include IoM and French representatives.
    - It's proposed that a longer Ramsar workshop be included at IIEM 2027.
- Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) progress -
    - A full report is due for publication imminently. It will be available on the gov.je website and will be circulated to the membership.
    - 57 of the 91 activities included in the MSP are either active, completed or in progress.
    - 21.7% of Jersey's waters are now protected from dredging/trawling.
- Offshore reefs survey -
    - MR are taking a surveyor to the Écréhous and Minquiers to establish ground points for new aerial photography.
- UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH) report -
    - UKCEH was commissioned by Defra to assess the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies' Ramsar site management.
    - The final report is expected to be published shortly. It will be circulated to members once available.
- JRMA annual reporting -
    - JRMA has an obligation to issue annual reports. It was explained that it is not considered necessary or practical to issue a full data-set annual report (such as the initial report issued last year) every year. Instead, a shorter report will be issued most years, embedded in the Marine Resources annual report, with a larger full data-set report being issued every three to four years.

AM queried whether any species changes or particular pressures had been observed, given this year's extreme weather. It was reported that one of the biggest changes was a noticeable drop in shellfish landings, with new species, such as octopus, moving into our waters, and fisheries having to adapt. Bluefin tuna have provided a welcome boost to local fisheries with Jersey craft catching 77. It was questioned whether bluefin tuna were having an effect on other stocks, and reported that stomach sampling suggested tuna are mostly eating smaller fish and likely having little effect higher up the food chain.

4. Update on the Havre des Pas coastal flood alleviation scheme

Steven Fitzgibbon (Coastal Engineering) kindly joined us to provide an update on the Havre des Pas coastal flood alleviation scheme.

It was reported that timelines have altered slightly. Planning consent is now likely to be sought in January 2028, instead of 2027, with construction hoped to commence in 2030.

Members were reminded of the necessity of the c.£160m scheme due to increased flooding risk, and some of the alternative options that had been explored were explained. The preferred option is to build a new seawall 5-10m out from the existing wall, with the plans incorporating pathways, cycleways, parking, gardens (potentially community gardens) and seating.

Regular update emails are issued. Anyone wishing to receive these can sign up by contacting coastal@gov.je.

As these plans involve a loss to the area of the South East coast Ramsar site, Defra (as our liaison with the Ramsar Secretariat) were informed of the expected loss of area in October 2025 and two meetings have been held with them since.

Under the Ramsar agreement (Article 2.5), it is permitted to alter a Ramsar site due to urgent national interests (as in this instance). Article 4.2 requires that compensation be made for this loss, so a site extension, potentially from Gorey to St Catherine's, has been discussed.

AECOM consultants are being commissioned to conduct an ecological character assessment and advise on the necessary compensatory measures.

CE will continue to engage with local experts to continue survey work. They are mindful of minimising impact on species and the environment and are considering issues such as the migration of eels.

There was discussion over the existing slipways, and whether these should be left in situ and built over or dismantled and rebuilt using existing materials. Members were in favour of reusing the materials and were happy to provide formal support if needed.

JMC stressed that there has been a gradual degradation of ecological character in the area, highlighting the need for compensatory measures. The possibility of incorporating living walls, as being used by PoJ, within the project was also raised.

5. Balancing the needs of birds and dogs on beaches

LRM gave a presentation in relation to their ongoing work in relation to our shorebirds, which are a defining characteristic for the designation of our South East coast Ramsar site.

SJ data, going back 35 years, on Brent geese and waders, has been analysed and a report will be published next month.

- Brent geese numbers have doubled since 1974 and they are doing better here than in the UK (potentially due to our seagrass beds and inland flooded fields). However, numbers in some areas have actually declined, particularly on beaches on the south coast, to the east of town.
- Of the ten wader species where there is sufficient data for trend analysis, none are increasing significantly, whilst six are declining significantly, with two heading towards local extinction. As these are winter migrants, there are likely to be external factors involved in the decline. However, five of the species are declining faster here than in the UK, which may suggest a local issue.

Although not part of the the analysed datasets, it was noted that some other species, such as cattle egrets, had increased in recent years.

There is increasing evidence showing that birds are being harmed by disturbance from recreational activity. A 2014 survey suggested lots of disturbance from walkers and dogs. LRM conducted a pilot study over the summer of 2026, and will continue this over the winter. The pilot showed a strong correlation between the presence of dogs (regardless of whether on a lead or not) and birds being disturbed. This disturbance wastes much needed energy reserves and prevents birds from feeding.

Jersey’s dog population has increased by 24.7% in the last 5 years. There are now 88 dogs per km2, one of the highest densities in Europe.

Concerns were expressed over current petitions/discussions proposing a reduction to the months during which dogs need to be kept on leads on beaches.

Raising awareness is important in changing behaviours and reducing disturbance. LRM announced an upcoming evidence-based campaign to increase public awareness of the importance of our migratory shorebirds and the challenges they face. LRM will reach out to partners such as NTJ and SJ shortly in relation to partnering on this.

It was mentioned that getting into schools to raise awareness amongst children would be beneficial. Free wader watching/info sessions were also proposed.

Targeting the dog licensing process was discussed, and it was agreed that, if possible, protecting wildlife should be added to the licence conditions which must be accepted when completing the renewal form. Access to a video explaining the need for dog control close to birds was also suggested.

LRM suggested that reworking the current restrictions would be beneficial, to restrict dogs on certain sensitive beaches at all times, whilst allowing them off the lead at all times on others. They are working to identify target beaches.

Issues of policing were also raised and it was suggested that raising the cost of dog licences could help pay for dedicated dog wardens.

Gr expressed support for the proposed restricted beaches. He reported receiving many complaints about the behaviour of dogs on beaches, but explained the difficulties of policing them. He would be happy to be a voice in the States to advocate for restricted beaches and to oppose any moves to reduce the months during which dogs need to be kept on leads.

6. EyeSea

To be covered in a future meeting due to the unavoidable absence of PoJ.

7. Solutions to reduce ghost fishing

MR firstly reported that a Proposition is being brought to the States to increase the no parlour pot zone around the Écréhous, partially using the boundary of the Ramsar site to the 2 degree line. The fishing industry is supportive of this move, which is expected to come into force on 17th November 2026.

It was explained that ghost fishing, where lost or abandoned fishing gear continues to catch and kill animals, is an issue MR is trying to tackle. Recent changes to the fishing fleet have exacerbated this issue, with boats being sold before gear can be collected in.

It was, historically, difficult to dispose of gear, which led to it being dumped or abandoned, so MR initiated a scheme in conjunction with the prison, which allows pots and rope to be broken down and reused/recycled/destroyed.

MR is also starting to do routine exit interviews with those leaving the industry, to gather feedback on their experiences and ensure gear is accounted for. Ministers may also consider a compensation scheme to encourage pots to be retrieved. All pots have recently been retagged, which will assist with identifying those which are older and not in active use.

MR would like to establish a database of lost/discarded pots, which their patrol boat can then retrieve. Anyone spotting what they believe to be discarded gear can log it in the epicollect app and MR will then enact a plan to bring it back to shore. EyeSea was considered for this, but was not pursued due to sensitivity concerns.

MR will circulate an infographic (via Admin) explaining how the register works.

MR do not recommend any retrieval of fishing gear at sea by the public due to the dangerous nature of this work.

8. Marine Mission Wetlands 2027 event

JMC's Marine Mission Wetlands 2027 event will be on 1st February 2027. There will be a daytime event for schools and an evening exhibition with talks. Members are encouraged to share information about the event. Tickets are free, and can be booked through a link from the JMC website at jerseymarineconservation.org/marine-mission-wetlands-event

Anybody wishing to be involved in the exhibition should contact JMC.

10. Close and next meeting

The next meeting is planned for 19th April 2027, 18:00 - 20:00, at St Martin's Public Hall.

AM thanked the speakers and closed the meeting.