Jersey Ramsar Advisory Group (JRAG) meeting minutes

13th October 2025, 18:00 (St Helier Yacht Club)

Attendees:

- Chairman (AM)
- Earth Project Jersey (EPJ)
- Écréhous Residents Association (ERA)
- Jersey Heritage (Geopark) (JH)
- Jersey International Centre of Advanced Studies (JICAS)
- Jersey Marine Conservation (JMC)
- Jersey National Park (JNP)
- Jersey Ramsar Management Authority (JRMA)
- Maîtresse Île Residents Association (MIRA)
- National Trust for Jersey (NTJ)
- Natural Environment (Land Resource Management) (LRM)
- Natural Environment (Marine Resources) (MR)
- Parish of Grouville (Gr)
- Parish of St Martin (StM)
- Société Jersiaise (SJ)
- JRAG administrator (Admin)

Guest speakers (non members):

- Lead Engineer for Coastal Engineering (CE)

Apologies:

- HM Receiver General
- Jersey Kayak & Walk Adventures
- Ports of Jersey

Agenda items

1. Welcome

AM welcomed attendees and outlined the agenda and speakers.

He advised that, in accordance with JRAG's Terms of Reference, an annual report will be circulated to members in late January and presented at a short public meeting at World Wetlands Day on 2nd February 2026.

2. New members - introductions and election of JICAS as a new member

A new representative for SJ was introduced and welcomed.

JICAS was presented as a prospective member of JRAG and its proposed representative introduced. JICAS is keen to be involved with JRAG and to promote Ramsar-oriented projects to students on its MSc Island Biodiversity and Conservation course.

JICAS was unanimously elected as a member of JRAG, in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

3. JRMA update

JRMA reported that its Annual Scientific Report for 2024 is complete, has been reviewed by the Minister, and is expected to be published on the gov.je website by the end of October 2025. The Report, the first of its kind relating to Ramsar sites, provides invaluable baseline data, assisting with the future management and monitoring of the Ramsar sites and allowing changes to be identified. A high level overview of the data covered was given.

It was asked whether it is possible for fishing vessels to turn off vessel monitoring systems. Attendees were reassured that it is mandatory to have them functioning at all times when a vessel is active, and that they can only be deactivated by turning off all power to the vessel.

JMC mentioned that a backlog of its Seasearch data was currently being brought up to date and would be available soon.

4. Water quality analysis

LRM presented an overview of water quality analysis methodology and findings.

The South East coast area is monitored yearly and the reefs every three years.

All 2024 results (which represent a six year average) were within the parameters set by the EU's Water Framework Directive (WFD), apart from elevated readings for lead and zinc, which are believed to be the result of data inaccuracies due to laboratory changes. Laboratory improvements have now been made, and the 2024 results (when taken in isolation) are within the WFD criteria.

It was raised that possible reasons for the elevated levels (should they prove to be more than a data inaccuracy) are blight sprays and the reclamation site. No samples were retained, so retesting is not possible.

It was asked whether there are plans to test runoffs for PFAS. Whilst this may be possible in the future, for now resource dictates that the focus be on St Ouen's Bay.

It was asked whether testing of the sludge at Elizabeth Harbour is being carried out with respect to prospective dumping from the proposed harbour development. It was confirmed that this is included in the environmental assessment and that plume models are being redone. It is hoped that Ports of Jersey will present an update at the next JRAG meeting, when this can be discussed in more depth.

5. Havre des Pas coastal flood alleviation scheme

CE presented an update on the proposed scheme, explaining the clear need for flood alleviation measures and the different options that were considered, as well as showing designs and explaining projected timelines (with construction expected 2029-2033).

It was mentioned that a later second phase may extend the defences further East and that resilience is being built into the plans, with options to increase heights in the future.

The planned cycle route, planting and promenade were welcomed as positive by-products, creating a safer car-free route to town.

The loss of area from the South East coast Ramsar site is projected to be around 0.12%. An environmental impact assessment is being carried out and CE are working with Natural Environment on this. Modelling suggests that the beach level will rise, with sand being deposited behind the new wall and a healthy new beach being created over time. The environmental impact is expected to be small.

The loss of area from the Ramsar site needs to be reported to the Ramsar Secretariat (through Defra). JRMA has already written to Defra to advise of a potential loss, and also a potential compensatory increase in area elsewhere.

6. Open discussion

JNP led an open discussion around balancing the needs of users of Ramsar designated areas (including dogs) with conservation.

The view of those present was that education, such as the campaigns run recently by JNP, was crucial in ensuring users act responsibly. Suggestions included going into schools to educate the next generation and using the dog licensing process to require owners to acknowledge guidance. Policing was acknowledged to be tricky.

It was noted that the number of dogs which professional dog walkers can walk may be reduced by legislative changes due to go before the States in December.

With regards to the reefs, it was noted that the residents' associations have circulated codes of conduct around marinas. The main issue is that too many people are now visiting the reefs. Bodies such as Visit Jersey should be encouraged to revise their messaging to emphasise the importance of these areas and inspire a culture of conservation and respect among visitors. A cap/levy on day-trippers could also be beneficial.

7. Archaeology update

It was reported that archaeologists from the University of Brest visited in early September to assist with archaeological survey work around Violet Reef.

Results are still being processed, but some interesting finds were reported, with drone ground mapping proving particularly helpful and indicating a remarkable number of fish traps. Other finds include a site believed to be associated with celebrating the spring equinox and a large multipurpose wall/roadway/fishtrap.

The French team are reportedly keen to revisit next year to continue the work.

8. Compliance with Ramsar reporting requirements

EPJ raised concerns over Jersey's compliance with reporting obligations under Ramsar.

JRMA reported that ongoing attempts are being made to establish the limits of acceptable change beyond which changes to ecological character must be reported to the Ramsar Secretariat. Defra has, as yet, provided no definitive answer.

It is not believed that events such as individual pollution incidents require reporting, unless they are likely to "change the long term character of the Ramsar site", as is stipulated in the Ramsar Convention. The proposed works at Havre des Pas have already been raised with Defra. Plans for the harbour development (and in particular the dumping of sludge) are being monitored and may require reporting once modelling is complete and the potential impact can be assessed. This is a good test case to further discussions with Defra on the limits of acceptable change.

Action:

- JRMA to continue discussions with Defra
- AM to raise with former head of Ramsar Secretariat acquaintance

9. Close

AM thanked all the speakers and closed the meeting.

Next meeting

Monday, 30th March 2025, 18:00 - 20:00, St Helier Yacht Club