Jersey Ramsar Advisory Group (JRAG) meeting minutes

30th March 2026, 18:00 (St Helier Yacht Club)

Attendees:

- Chairman (AM)
- Blue Marine Foundation (BMF)
- Écréhous Residents Association (ERA)
- HM Receiver General (RG)
- Jersey Heritage (Geopark) (JHG)
- Jersey International Centre of Advanced Studies (JICAS)
- Jersey Kayak & Walk Adventures (JKWA)
- Jersey Marine Conservation (JMC)
- Jersey National Park (JNP)
- Jersey Ramsar Management Authority (JRMA)
- Jersey Seafaris (JS)
- Maîtresse Île Residents Association (MIRA)
- National Trust for Jersey (NTJ)
- Natural Environment (Biosecurity) (B)
- Natural Environment (Land Resource Management) (LRM)
- Natural Environment (Marine Resources) (MR)
- Parish of St Martin (StM)
- Ports of Jersey (POJ)
- Société Jersiaise (SJ)
- JRAG administrator (Admin)

Guest speakers (non members):

- Senior Engineer (Geotechnical/Environmental) Hartigan

Apologies:

- Earth Project Jersey (EPJ)
- Constable of St Martin

Agenda items

1. Welcome

AM welcomed attendees and outlined the agenda and speakers.

2. Approval of minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2025 were unanimously adopted.

3. JRMA update

JRMA presented brief updates on:

- Havre des Pas coastal flood alleviation scheme compensation/mitigation -
    - JRMA has formally notified the Ramsar Secretariat, via Defra, that this scheme is expected to go ahead, resulting in a loss of around 0.12% of the South East Coast Ramsar site.

    - There will be a feasibility study into the possibility of extending the site towards St Catherine's by way of compensation. This presents an opportunity to protect valuable seagrass habitats. If the feasibility study recommends this extension (which is likely to be much larger than the area being lost), there will be a formal consultation and stakeholder engagement.
    - Research is also planned to recommend mitigation to reduce disturbance, particularly to shorebirds, during the building phase of the project.
    - Planning applications are not expected to go in until late 2027, allowing time for this preparatory work. Any compensatory measures would only go ahead once planning consent for the coastal flood alleviation scheme is obtained.
    - Regular meetings are being held with Defra to keep them informed.
- Defra audit -
    - Defra is carrying out an audit of Ramsar management processes in the overseas territories and crown dependencies, and a number of members of JRAG and GoJ have been interviewed. Defra are believed to be happy with our management.
- Limits of acceptable ecological change -
    - A definition of limits of acceptable ecological change has been requested from Defra. Once that guidance is available, the monitoring and baseline data that has already been gathered will allow limits to be set.
    - A recent student project on intertidal ecology across the South East Coast Ramsar site included a literature review and made recommendations for ongoing monitoring, which will be followed.
    - It is hoped to obtain funding for a student to carry out a project and literature review on defining limits of acceptable change. As Defra is the signatory body, it is preferable to follow their lead if possible, but the review could also consider whether we can progress this independently of Defra if needed.

4. Gorey harbour works update

A Senior Engineer from Hartigan gave an update on work being carried out to Gorey Pier, expected to begin in Mid-April and take around two and a half months to complete. This work is the result of long term damage and defects in the concrete deck structure. The current work is to remove the deck. Consultation on the future use of the pier and plans for its repair will form a separate phase.

Ecological impact statements have been carried out and the site will be accessed, and debris removed, via the pier, rather than across the beach, to minimise disturbance.

Concerns were raised over the impact on boat owners of the end of the pier being unavailable for visiting boats to tie up whilst queuing to refuel. It was suggested that girders/pillars from the lower platform might be a solution. Hartigans will raise this with the Public Services Manager and will revert to JRAG and boat owners groups.

5. Marine Spatial Plan (MSP) and associated amendments to the Trawling, Netting and Dredging Regulations

MR explained how detailed surveying (including sediment sampling and drop cameras) was carried out to produce a habitat map, based on OSPAR criteria and considering biodiversity and blue carbon, to allow a fact-based approach to designating marine protected areas (MPAs).

This has resulted in the adoption of the Sea Fisheries (Trawling, Netting and Dredging) (Jersey) Amendment Regulations 2026, which significantly increases the extent of Jersey's MPAs, from

around 6% to 21.7% in 2026. Further areas are being phased in by 2030, to allow fishermen time to diversify, taking that percentage to 23.6%. It was emphasised that the areas designated represent a compromise between conservation and commercial use. Only areas which are actively trawled and are in need of protection have been designated. Our Ramsar sites are well protected.

Other amendments were also enacted through the Regulations, including improvements in relation to gill netting and a ban on electric fishing.

It was queried whether the area around the wrecks near the Paternosters could have been included, but it was explained that this falls under a different objective under the MSP, while MPAs are used only where mobile gear is the issue.

The membership expressed their thanks and praise for the work undertaken and the enhanced protections.

6. Archaeology update

JHGs reported that archaeologists from the University of Brest, who specialise in intertidal archaeology, visited to assist with archaeological survey work around Violet Reef. They looked in particular at suspected standing stones, quern stones and wall-like features.

Their full report should be issued during April/May, but initial findings suggest late neolithic/early bronze age habitation within the Ramsar site, with the wall-like structures being fish traps.

The hope is to invite them back, hopefully in 2027, to date the fish traps, carry out further investigation of the standing stones, and expand the survey area.

7. Ports of Jersey's Harbour Master Plan

POJ presented an update on the Elizabeth Harbour redevelopment. The work will be phased, beginning with marine works, before moving on to the logistics facilities and, finally, the terminal buildings and infrastructure.

The marine works are still at the design phase and environmental assessments and studies into seagrass seeding, dredging, sediment management and plume disbursement, etc. are ongoing. Environmental considerations form an integral part of the design and will be actively managed.

At present, the plan for dredged material is to check it and, once deemed safe, dump it to the south of the island. Work is ongoing to establish the volume of material to be dredged. One positive outcome of survey work is that there is no indication of high levels of PFAS/heavy metals in the area to be dredged.

Concerns were raised over the management of boat traffic around the redeveloped harbour, with leisure traffic potentially being held up by larger vessels berthing. POJ will look at how best to manage traffic.

8. The importance of long term data sets

The SJ representative provided an overview of the work of the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG) and, in particular, how regular monitoring and baseline datasets spanning almost 50 years had allowed the early detection of population declines due to bird flu and assisted with mitigating oil spills.

SOTEAG's data are publicly available and used by academics, students and policy makers for a number of different use cases, including studying the long term effects of climate change and backing up policy decisions. Their oil spill sensitivity maps were noted as particularly useful.

As well as highlighting the value of long term datasets, SOTEAG's work emphasises the importance of collaboration and information sharing, both for educational purposes and for scientific and conservation advancement.

9. Reflections on Marine Mission Wetlands event

AM thanked JMC for organising the 2026 event, stressing how much work is involved.

Next year's event is expected to be held on 1st or 2nd February, again involving a daytime event for schools and a public exhibition and talks.

It was noted that the event costs a lot to put on. This year's sponsors were thanked, and anyone aware of organisations who might be interested in sponsoring the event in 2027 were asked to contact JMC, particularly anyone willing to sponsor a headline speaker.

Anybody wanting to speak or have a stand at the next event was invited to get in touch with JMC.

The key to the event's success is good attendance, so all members were encouraged to assist with promoting next year's event through word of mouth.

10. Close

AM thanked the speakers and closed the meeting.

Next meeting

The next meeting is provisionally planned for 19th October 2026, 18:00 - 20:00. It is uncertain whether St Helier Yacht Club will be available for future meetings. The Seaside Cafe at Greve de Lecq and St Martin's Public Hall were suggested/offered as potential alternatives, but further suggestions are welcomed.