



Governance structures and guiding principles

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Scope

This governance structures and guiding principles document is for the UK Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP). It should be treated as a live document, which will need reviewing bi-annually.

The Partnership

MCCIP is the primary independent source of marine climate change impacts evidence and adaptation advice in the UK. From directly supporting policy and legislation, to assessing key climate risks across marine sectors, MCCIP continues to provide a critical hub for scientists, policy makers, and wider society to collectively address marine climate issues.

As a mature partnership, there is an established core membership (see annex 1) who have signed up to a partnership agreement document. Membership can be reviewed on an as needed basis to bring in relevant expertise for the benefit of partnership direction and functioning, or for members to leave the partnership where levels of engagement have become less significant.

MCCIP structures and governance principles

A key factor in the success of the Marine Climate Change Impacts Partnership (MCCIP) is the role, standing and commitment of the Steering Group, Management Group and Working Groups, which together ensure that MCCIP achieves its overall aim. A dedicated, funded secretariat engages with all groups and is responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the work programme.

Steering Group (SG): The primary function of the steering group is to provide a mechanism to deliver the MCCIP aim and objectives. The group's role is to own MCCIP and direct the work of partners, and the secretariat. All MCCIP partners are entitled to participate in the SG's work.

Management Group (MG): The primary aim of the management group is to oversee the operational delivery of MCCIP, including finance and risk. The group works to ensure that the strategic direction of the partnership, as mandated by the SG through the business plan and steering group decisions, is adhered to.

Secretariat: MCCIP is supported by a permanent funded secretariat, which acts as a central source of information and focal point for MCCIP activities. The MCCIP Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the work programme, gathering information and producing a clear overview of effort and outcomes.

Working Groups (WGs): MCCIP delivers its work through a number of discreet working groups. These are the operational delivery mechanism for much of MCCIP's outputs and report to the Steering Group. When a working group forms, the SG will be invited to propose members for the WG, and thereafter, WG membership can be discussed via the Secretariat.

Current MCCIP Working Groups

Coasts and Seas Evidence (CASE) Working Group: The primary aim of the CASE-WG is to oversee the operational delivery of MCCIP impacts evidence, providing a comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible overview of the effects of climate change on UK coasts and seas.

Vulnerability, Adaptation and Resilience (VAR-WG) Working Group: The primary aim of the VAR-WG is to oversee the operational delivery of MCCIP vulnerability, adaptation and resilience activities and outputs, engaging with a wide range of end user communities to assess risks and help build resilience.

Overseas working group (OWG): The aim of the Overseas Working Group (OWG) is to oversee delivery of international project(s), currently focussed on the UK Overseas Territories. The OWG will help direct the work of regional partners with support and input from the MCCIP secretariat.

Other WGs will be constituted on an as needed basis.

Full terms of reference for the MCCIP Steering Group, Management Group and Working Groups are available in annex 1, along with a general description of work undertaken by the Secretariat.

MCCIP guiding principles

Since 2005, MCCIP has been the primary independent provider of evidence and adaptation advice on marine climate change impacts in the UK. The “Scientific Integrity and Independence Risk Management Scheme (SIIRMS)” formally describes MCCIP’s guiding principles for reporting on marine climate change impacts and adaptation. The SIIRMS model will continue to underpin the delivery of independent, quality assured scientific outputs from MCCIP (Also see Frost et al. 2017, ["Reporting marine climate change impacts: lessons from the science – policy interface"](#)).

MCCIP Scientific Integrity and Independence Risk Management Scheme (SIIRMS)		
Process step	Risk to independence	Risk Management
1. Information identification	Selection bias: ‘cherry-picking’ topics/research areas that support pre-held opinions e.g. only topics where dramatic climate impacts are chosen to support the opinion that climate change is a significant issue for scientists and policy makers.	<p>Joint setting of ‘information agenda’: agree information reporting areas with scientists and end-users/stakeholders.</p> <p>Transparent decisions: be clear to end-users on reporting process including choice of overall theme and state reason for including/excluding specific information areas.</p>
2. Expert identification	<p>Expert bias: selecting expert or narrow group of experts known for promoting certain views/hypotheses.</p> <p>Not considering ‘cognitive frailties’ involved in use of expert advice</p>	<p>Comprehensive expert involvement: all individuals with relevant expertise are invited to contribute regardless of opinions/views.</p> <p>Expert representation guidance: lead authors are made to understand they are collating information to reflect consensus if it exists or the wide range of opinion in the subject area – they not gathering evidence to support their own research findings and/or opinions. They are asked for example to co-author their submission with as many scientists in the field as possible (co-authors can also be suggested by the work group overseeing the process).</p> <p>Independent peer review process: all scientific submissions should be subject to an</p>

		independent review process by identified subject specialists, and not generalists
3. Information translation	Interpretation bias: those responsible for translating the information for the policy community can introduce their own bias and opinion.	<p>Clear ToRs and accountability: it must be made clear to those responsible that their role is to translate the information so it is clearer to understand for policy-makers and other end-users, not to introduce their own interpretation of the facts or data or to provide their own political opinions. Groups of individuals need to be vigilant in this and hold each other to account when it is suspected that personal opinion or bias has crept in.</p> <p>Scientists cross-check: any higher-level dissemination of the information supplied by the science community should be checked with the relevant scientists to ensure they are happy with how the information has been conveyed.</p> <p>Information and data audit: it is vital that end-users have access not just to high-level synthesis reports but to the more detailed information as supplied by the science community. This should include wherever possible access to the data and the experts who provide the analysis.</p>
4. Information Communication	Evidence 'weighting' bias: evidence or advice may be given too much credence or credibility. This may involve the 'hype' or 'overplaying' certain statements in the media or elsewhere.	Confidence Assessment: a clearly understandable confidence assessment should be used alongside any evidence provision/communication. Communicating 'uncertainty' is as an essential element of communication.

Annex 1: Steering Group, Management Group and Working Group ToRs and description of work undertaken by the secretariat.

Steering Group (SG) ToRs

1. Purpose

The primary function of the steering group is to provide a mechanism to deliver the overall MCCIP aim and objectives. The group's role is to own MCCIP and direct the work of partners and the secretariat. All MCCIP partners are entitled to participate in the SG's work.

2. Steering Group Objectives

The objectives of the Steering Group are to:

- Oversee the development of the Partnership.
- Receive progress updates on MCCIP activities.
- Delegate tasks to working groups as appropriate.
- Monitor and evaluate implementation of the Business Plan.
- Communicate MCCIP messages to their respective organisations.
- Promote the value of MCCIP to relevant stakeholders and wider networks.
- Provide sign off for budget and deliverables, as proposed by the management group.
- Contribute to MCCIP working groups.

3. Membership

Steering group partners include UK and devolved government departments, other central and local authorities and agencies, research bodies, marine industry representatives, nature conservation agencies and non-governmental organisations.

Each Partner organisation is entitled to be represented on the Steering Group. Partners comprise those stakeholders who have contributed financially to the partnership and/or are committed to providing a contribution "in kind" as described in the partnership agreement form.

Each partner organisation should be able to commit long-term (over the lifetime of the current 5 year business plan) the necessary time to Steering Group activities to maintain stability and functionality. Multiple representatives may sit on the SG, or support WG activities, but Partner organisations will only have one vote at the table.

Current MCCIP partners (as of 19/09/2025) are:

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute; Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science; Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; The Crown Estate; Environment Agency; Isle of Man Government; Joint Nature Conservation Committee; Marine Institute, Ireland; Marine Management Organisation; Scottish Government's Marine Directorate; Met Office; Natural England; Natural Resources Wales; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; Scottish Environment Protection Agency; Nature Scot; States of Guernsey; States of Jersey; Welsh Government and World Wide fund for Nature

4. Reporting arrangements

The SG will report to policy and decision makers across their organisations, including reporting to the Ocean Processes Evidence Group, into the Marine Assessment and Reporting Group (MARG), or separately into the Policy Leads Group (PLG) under UKMMAS.

5. Meetings

Steering Group Meetings will typically be held twice per year. The Spring meeting will be to consider priorities for the coming FY, and an Autumn meeting for reviewing progress and forward planning. Meetings may be hosted online or at different partner institute venues across the UK. Meeting papers will be co-ordinated by the MCCIP Secretariat and sent to members at least one week in advance of the meeting where possible.

Management group (MG) ToRs

1. Aim

The primary aim of the management group is to oversee the operational delivery of MCCIP.

The group will work to ensure that the strategic direction of the partnership, as mandated by the SG through the business plan and steering group decisions, is adhered to.

2. Objectives

The management group is tasked with:

- Overseeing the smooth operational delivery of the MCCIP work programme (note that the WG groups will still have responsibility for *delivering* outputs).
- Receiving progress updates on deliverables and outreach activities.
- Responding to ad-hoc requests emerging from full SG meetings.
- Finances and risk management.
- Overseeing programme reviews and the development of future business plans.

3. Membership

The Management Group (MG) includes the MCCIP chair, principal funders, and the secretariat as ex-officio members. A small number of additional volunteers, on a rotating basis, will be asked to support the activities of the Management Group at the request of the SG.

4. Reporting arrangements

The management group will report back to the SG as an agenda item at every SG meeting.

5. Meetings

The management group will meet remotely 4 times a year (within a month before and after each SG meeting). This will help ensure that the secretariat has access to guidance and support at regular intervals and ensures continued progress towards actions and deliverables.

Coasts and Seas Evidence (CASE) Working Group ToRs

Aim

The primary aim of the CASE-WG is to oversee the operational delivery of MCCIP impacts evidence, providing a comprehensive, up-to-date, and accessible overview of the impacts of climate change on UK coasts and seas, and their effects on ecosystems and society.

Objectives

The WG oversees the technical delivery of MCCIP evidence reporting, in accordance with the MCCIP 'Scientific Integrity and Independence Risk Management Scheme' (SIIRMS).

Specific objectives are to:

1. Establish effective mechanisms for the provision of rolling evidence updates.
2. Maintain a watching brief on significant developments in the UK marine climate change evidence base, and changing policy needs, to inform WG activities and priority areas for reporting (e.g. new topics to report on).
3. Oversee the delivery of marine climate change impacts evidence, in accordance with stated needs of the partnership.
4. Identify scientific experts who are most appropriate to contribute to the scientific evidence base for MCCIP (as topic leads, contributing authors and reviewers).
5. Translate the evidence provided by scientific experts into concise, un-biased messages that can be readily understood by non-technical audiences.
6. Contribute to the quality assurance of outputs.
7. Identify opportunities to promote MCCIP evidence reviews and any synthesis reports.
8. Support ad-hoc activities (e.g. collation of evidence gaps across MCCIP topics).

Reporting arrangements

The WG will report back to the SG as an agenda item at every SG meeting. The WG will present a production plan for sign off by the SG. Once the production process is completed, the WG chair will sign-off final products for publication.

Membership

Each member should be able to commit long-term the necessary time to WG activities to maintain stability and functionality. Individuals are mandated based on their relevant expertise, not to act as representatives for their organisations. Membership is limited to 6-8 people, including the chair and secretariat, to help ensure that the working group is functional, and can effectively fulfil its duties as a neutral clearing house for the evidence base.

Meetings

There will be approximately 4-6 meetings per annum. Additional, ad-hoc meetings may be called to deal with specific issues as they arise. All meetings will be online and limited to a morning or afternoon session (typically 1-1.5 hours duration). Meeting papers will be co-ordinated by the MCCIP secretariat. It is anticipated that the time commitment for WG members will be 5-10 days per annum.

Vulnerability, Adaptation and Resilience (VAR) Working Group ToRs

Aim

The primary aim of the VAR-WG is to oversee the operational delivery of MCCIP vulnerability, adaptation and resilience activities and outputs, engaging with a wide range of end user communities to support climate action.

Objectives

The WG oversees the technical delivery of MCCIP VAR activities, in accordance with the MCCIP 'Scientific Integrity and Independence Risk Management Scheme' (SIIRMS) model.

Specific objectives are to:

1. Establish effective mechanisms for the provision of adaptation support.
2. Build stakeholder communities around key sectors and interest groups, drawing on existing networks.
3. Plan bespoke activities and outputs for identified stakeholder communities and oversee their delivery (in accordance with stated needs agreed with the SG).
4. Undertake a range of engagement activities, including stakeholder surveys, workshops and dissemination events.
5. Produce quality assured outputs appropriate for each target audience (from high level summaries to risk assessments, technical reviews and decision support tools).
6. Develop ideas for the format and style of web outputs.
7. Contribute to the quality assurance of outputs.
8. Develop and implement targeted communication plans.

Reporting arrangements

The WG will report back to the SG as an agenda item at every SG meeting. The WG will present a production plan for sign off by the SG. Once the production process is completed, the SG chair will sign-off final products for publication.

Membership

Each member should be able to commit long-term the necessary time to WG activities to maintain stability and functionality. Individuals are mandated based on their relevant expertise, not to act as representatives for their organisations. Membership may also be drawn from wider parts of member organisations, where relevant expertise exists.

It is anticipated that the time commitment for WG members will be up to 10 days per annum, with each delivery cycle expected to take 12-18 months.

Meetings

There will be approximately 4-6 meetings per annum. Additional, ad-hoc meetings may be called to deal with specific issues as they arise. All meetings will be online and limited to a morning or afternoon session (typically 1-2 hours duration). Meeting papers will be co-ordinated by the MCCIP secretariat.

Overseas Working Group (OWG)

Purpose

The aim of the Overseas Working Group (OWG) is to oversee delivery of international project(s), currently focussed on the UK Overseas Territories. The OWG will help direct the work of regional partners with support and input from the MCCIP secretariat.

Objectives

The objectives of the Working Group are to:

- Receive progress updates and attend project meetings.
- Identify key UKOT science and policy experts with whom to engage.
- Agree on the final format of deliverables.
- Review progress and make decisions on regional and / or sector specific outputs.
- Support the MCCIP chair on product sign-off.
- Promote the outputs and the value of MCCIP to internal and external stakeholders, and their wider networks.

Membership

The OWG is currently chaired by Dr Matt Frost (PML). Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, Defra, UKOTA, MMO, JNCC and invited MCCIP representatives make up the group.

Individual members are invited to be part of the OWG based on their relevant expertise, not to act as representatives for their organisations. This is important as MCCIP and its subgroups provide independent scientific advice and information (i.e. we are not pushing government, NGO or any other agendas). The small size of the OWG, and the focus on relevant expertise, will ensure that the working group is functional and operates as a neutral clearing house for the evidence base.

The OWG is supported by the MCCIP secretariat at Cefas, who will draw on wider internal expertise at Cefas as deemed appropriate (e.g. Cefas OT Blue Belt leads).

Reporting arrangement

The WG will report back to the SG as an agenda item at every SG meeting. The WG will present a production plan for sign off by the SG. Once the production process is completed, the SG chair will sign-off final products for publication.

Meetings

It is anticipated that there will be a minimum of five formal meetings, where the MCCIP secretariat and chair will report back to the OWG on progress with delivery.

These will comprise:

- Kick off meeting
- Progress meetings for stakeholder workshops
- Progress and feedback meetings on science outputs
- Headline messaging
- Output sign off
- Launch plans

Meetings of the OWG may be called on an ad-hoc basis, subject to project needs and will be held remotely. The MCCIP management group and Steering Group will be kept up to date with project developments.

General description of work undertaken by the secretariat

MCCIP is supported by a dedicated Secretariat, hosted by Cefas, which is responsible for the daily running of MCCIP, gathering information and producing a clear overview of effort and outcomes. The permanent Secretariat began 1st December 2005 and in Phase V will continue from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2030.

The secretariat includes an overall programme lead, co-lead, and project manager. Wider expertise from across Cefas is drawn upon on an as-needed basis.

Activities that the Secretariat leads on:

- Servicing the SG.
- SG meeting planning and production of minutes.
- Report on finances, planning and risk.
- Support and co-ordinate the delivery of agreed products.
- Dissemination of key documents and associated social media activity.
- Updating / maintaining the MCCIP website.
- Production of newsletters and updating / maintaining contact lists.
- Promotion of MCCIP, through contributions to articles, conferences and workshops and representation as marine climate change experts in related initiatives, as agreed with the SG e.g. UKCP / CCRA / NAP groups.
- Collating evidence for MCCIP reviews.
- Project management.

Activities that are out of scope of the Secretariat are:

- The secretariat cannot operate outside of the costed work programme (for example, to produce ad-hoc reports).
- The secretariat is not the decision maker body (e.g. for dates / venues for launch of products, initiation/cessation of products, direction of MCCIP, who attends meetings, who joins Partnership, who are on the WGs).
- The secretariat is not the sole / principal fundraiser.
- The secretariat does not provide data or additional research.
- The secretariat is not an external lobbying group.

As requirements from the Secretariat change over time, resources will need to respond flexibly as determined by regular reviews of the staffing profile.