

MarBEF Themes 1, 2 & 3: Joint Workshops

Two MarBEF workshops in Plymouth

By **Melanie Austen**

Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) recently organised and hosted two simultaneous MarBEF workshops from 13-16 August.



Discussion group at workshop in Plymouth.

The aim of a joint Theme 1+2+3 workshop, led and organised by Mel Austen and held at PML, was to examine the ecological data required to quantify marine ecosystem goods and services. Scientists attended from St Andrews, the Azores, Netherlands, USA, Poland and, of course, Plymouth. We addressed the questions: 'How can ecologists use the diversity of available data to quantify each of the different ecosystem services, given that the services are themselves an integration of many different ecological processes?' And: 'How can we include aspects of spatial and temporal variation?'

To do this, we took a brainstorming approach to each ecosystem service in turn, and examined the ecological processes and

functions that underlie the service, the data that is available to quantify these processes and the indicators that might be used to signal changes in the delivery of the services. The sessions were extremely good-humoured but at the same time often very challenging for all of the participants as they entailed a substantial amount of free and lateral thinking. It was generally agreed that the workshop was an excellent experience and it is planned that the outcome will be a joint review paper.

This workshop was held in PML with regular walks across the Hoe to the Marine Biological Association (MBA) for joint lunch breaks and a few joint brainstorming sessions with those at the concurrent Theme 1 workshop.



Participants at the cross-theme workshop in Plymouth.

The aim of the Theme 1 workshop, organised and led by Paul Somerfield, was to apply modelling approaches (ranging from numerical and statistical modelling to comparative modelling using outputs from ecosystem models), using a large database of macrobenthic data from across Europe, compiled with MarBEF, to gain insights into patterns and processes. This workshop attracted scientists from Norway, Greece, Germany and Sheffield as well as several eminent scientists from the Plymouth community. Essentially, Paul shut a small group of scientists, statisticians and modellers into the Resource Centre at the MBA. This is now a darkened room as the windows have been boarded up. Each person had a laptop, and the emphasis was on working together, rather than discussing work. Participants were let out for excellent sandwich lunches and tea/coffee breaks. This was a productive approach, with a report being compiled and then placed on the MarBEF website.



Fireworks display.

The small numbers of participants at the workshops made them quite productive and focused. The timing of the workshop, arranged by Paul Somerfield, was inspirational – coinciding with the National Fireworks Competition on the Hoe. The workshop participants certainly appreciated the excellent conference dinner in the MBA common room, and the fireworks display!

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