

The 2015 - 2018 SEG Outline Plan

1.0. Introduction

The SEG sustainable eel agenda is now 5 years old. It has grown and developed at a remarkable pace. The SEG network covers more than 20 countries with links to a 1000 people drawn from Science, Conservation and the Industry – it has become a key reference point and stakeholder for eel policy makers at both national and EU levels.

Whilst significant progress towards sustainability has been made, more so in some countries than others, the challenges ahead are as great as ever and the recovery of the eel is still considered to be many decades away.

A step change is needed to achieve the eel's recovery in our life time.

This new business plan has evolved directly from the previous one.

The start point of the sustainable eel agenda is the Vision document which was the output from the founding SEG meetings back in early 2010 at Fishmongers Hall.

Our Aim: *Healthy eel populations, distributed throughout their natural range fulfilling their role in the aquatic environment and capable of supporting sustainable exploitation for the benefit of local economies.*

Our Purpose: *To be the respected partnership that enables and promotes the joined up conservation and management of the eel in the Member States* of Europe and beyond, linking all interests in an open and effective process. (* previously worded UK and Europe)*

Our Objectives:

- *To help deliver the objectives of the EU Eel Regulation*
- *To develop, decipher and apply sound science to inform effective decision making*
- *To Influence policy makers at UK and European Levels*
- *To encourage well regulated and sustainable fisheries that support local economies and communities*
- *To promote greater public understanding of the eel*
- *To be effective at seeking income and resources to progress the aims of the group*

Outcomes: *The eels return to abundance*

- *For all River Basin Districts to be compliant with EU Eel Regulation*

- *For the eel to form a viable component of the aquatic communities*
- *For healthy and sustainable fisheries*

These statements of 5 years ago remain just as relevant today so it proposed to continue to develop the next business plans aligned to these founding statements.

It should also be stated that from the outset SEG's concept of operation was that Scientists, Conservationists and the Industry would all work together toward this shared vision and this remains central to SEG's thinking and daily operation. It has served the eel remarkably well thus far and unity is essential for delivering effective action.

SEG strategy is now looking to shape thinking at three levels, River Basin District (RBD), Country and Europe wide (North Africa is also of great significance). This plan concentrates at the highest or European level.

The leading players from the sustainable agenda give their time freely often working on it alongside their professional roles - without this commitment little would be achieved. SEG thanks you all.

2.0. Some Existing strands of thinking

- Making eel sustainability the focus of attention
- Making the unblocking of migration waterways central to the wider conservation agenda both inwards and return
- Helping the Fishery and Industry reform around the SEG Standard and the sustainable 'chain of custody'.
- Increasing awareness and understanding that eel science remains very incomplete and that accurate eel population measurement is illusive but essential. Cause and effect remains problematic.
- Positioning SEG as the organised voice for those who care about eels
- SEG works to the principle of openness and transparency

3.0. SWOT Analysis as at September 2015

It is well worth comparing the 2015 statements with those of 2011 to gauge a sense of progress.

2.1 Strengths

- The SEG sustainable eel agenda is established and supported by many key leaders and organisations across Atlantic Europe. Including many NGO's and notable scientists, most of the industry and the European Commission – the central ground.
- The SEG sustainability thinking has been scrutinised and tested during the last 3 years amongst many audiences.
- SEG is working with a wide and growing alliance of partner organisations (ZSL, IFM, Rivers Trusts, Wetlands International European Association, Wildlife Trusts etc)
- The SEG Standard (V5) is now embedded and is the basis for cooperation within the Industry (fisheries, collectors, farmers, smokers and retailers) and across national boundaries. Every stage except yellow and silver eel fishing has been revised and improved in the light of learning during assessment and operations.
- The independent assessment process and the Standards Panel have been tested and have matured – they are becoming less UK dominated and their independence is recognised.
- The integrated supply chain with its chain of custody is established and growing
- The proof that unblocking migration pathways enables a significant increase in eel migration has been demonstrated and proven
- The largest eel market is in Holland where DUPAN is committed to the sustainable solution using the SEG standard. Germany the 2nd largest market follows from 1st October. Both countries have created Stewardship Foundation Funds
- The UK Glass Eel fishery meets the SEG Standard. The French Fishery is working towards the standard adopting more sensitive catching and handling methods – better eel husbandry is being achieved but there is still some way to go especially with traceability and the ending of the illegal trade
- The SEG network translocated over the barriers 130 million eels during the 2013 and 2014 seasons
- There is now growing evidence that restocking / translocation is an effective emergency recovery measure (SLU Sweden and Liege Belgium)
- The negative impact of unscreened hydropower and water pumps is increasingly acknowledged and recorded in many science journals as well as the scale of their

deployment (25,000 hydros in EU) (World Fish Migration Conference Groningen 2015)

- The value of eel within wider citizen science and education programmes is acknowledged and appreciated (ZSL)

2.2. Weaknesses

- The SEG infrastructure remains under resourced and several key countries have struggled to develop effective internal networks. France and Germany are only now emerging
- The Stewardship Funding scheme (where the consumer who eats eel pays into the fund) as developed by DUPAN is only operating in Holland (Germany follows shortly). The commercial sectors in all countries should operate some sort of scheme to help fund the eel's recovery
- Some key NGO's remain reluctant to engage with positive actions to support the sustainable approach and overall there is no coordination between NGO's on implementation
- The SEG approach in the Mediterranean and Baltic remains in its infancy and much of the trade is unregulated. No progress has been made in North Africa. At a European level the industry and fishery remains dispersed, uncoordinated and reactive
- The Standard and sustainable logo has no customer recognition and the major supermarkets continue to avoid stocking eel
- The SEG Standard which is on its 5th iteration is not yet been refined through the ISEAL code
- Most European Countries have not yet developed or implemented large scale programmes to unblock the eel's migration pathways, both in and out in spite of WFD, the Habitats Directive and the Eel Regulation
- Eel scientific research lacks focus and coordination
- Many European Countries recovery plans have placed a great emphasis on restocking / translocation yet the validity of this EU approved conservation measure continues to be doubted in some quarters
- The yellow and silver eel fishery has not yet engaged with the SEG Standard and the independent assessment process even though national eel recovery plans have massively reduced its scale

2.3. Opportunities

- To take advantage of the goodwill towards a sustainable solution from the EU institutions
- To influence in a sustainable direction any revisions to the Eel Regulation
- To challenge national eel recovery plans where they are ineffective
- In England the potential of the EA's 'alternative measures policy' emanating from the eel statutory instrument and the compelling of owners of major obstructions to act or fund eel recovery
- To maximise the eel's unique status within the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and so win resources for eel recovery
- The desire of the major supermarkets to buy responsible and sustainably sourced fish from 3rd party approved supply chains
- To work with leading conservation NGO's to improve eel survival in all waters - Oceans, Estuaries, Rivers, Waterways, Lakes and Wetlands and to take advantage of the many European Funding streams
- SEG Governance needs to continue to reform around its European constituency
- The SEG standard Panel also needs to reflect the European wide agenda and may need to expand and divide between standard setting and the management of the certification process
- Wetlands International European Association - SEG is a key member of this NGO with a Europe wide reach
- The growing realisation that eel recovery is not just a fishery issue

2.4. Threats

- The sheer enormity and scale of the challenge – geographical, social, economic, scientific etc it is political
- Funding – the challenge of winning resources
- The dispersed nature of SEG's key leaders makes regular meetings very expensive on time and travel cost however effective communication is vital
- Human actions to enable eel recovery are an inexact mechanism with cause and effect difficult to prove and are in any event likely to take many decades to have a positive impact - there is no simple golden bullet
- Population measurement and reporting remains difficult, inconsistent and dispersed and so adds to the general confusion surrounding cost effective conservation measures

- Supermarkets continue to fail to understand the eel issue seeing it as a fishery one and therefore refuse to buy from the SEG approved supply chain and thereby support the recovery programme
- The SEG standard loses credibility or fails to build total confidence
- Certified organisations abuse the SEG standard
- Europe as whole fails to address and shut down the illegal trade and the traditional 'dark' image of the eel commerce pervades
- The huge costs of unblocking the migration pathways both in and out leads to inertia and inaction
- Poor co-ordination of recovery effort between different countries and between stakeholders with different agendas
- The weakened and dispersed fishery and industry has insufficient resources or commitment to make the difference
- Difference of opinion, interests and competition between members

4.0. Options / Focus – Concentration of effort

There is no desire to let up on the SEG mission of accelerating the eel's recovery. The options question is more about what to prioritise given the limited resources.

As a result of the experiences gained to date there are three logical groupings (all be it with overlaps). Broadly speaking these are the Atlantic Focus, the Mediterranean one and then a Baltic or East European one. The basis for this logic is a combination of the eel's natural life cycle, prevailing trading patterns and socio economic realities.

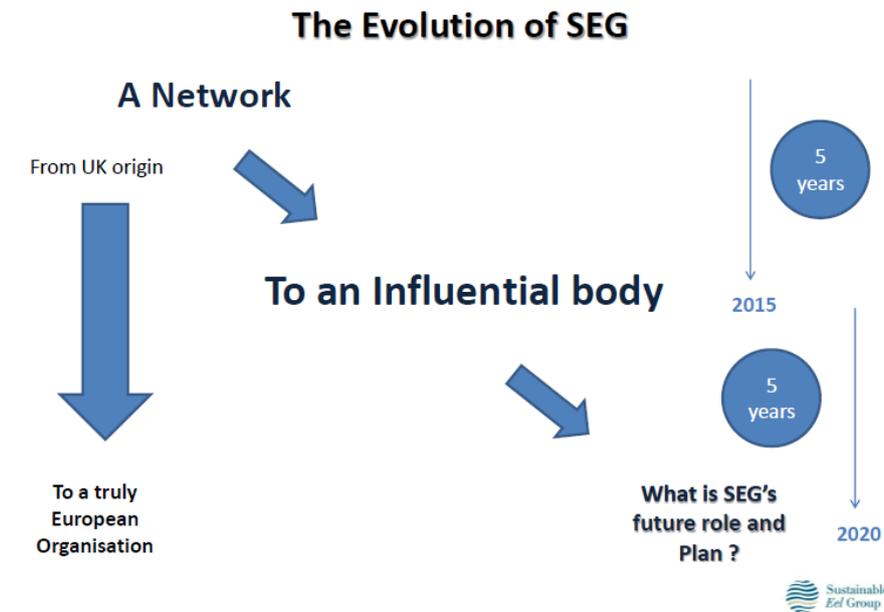
The Sustainable Agenda has developed to the greatest extent around England, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and to some extent with France – the Atlantic focus (Germany is likely to develop rapidly over the coming years as their eel initiative reinvents itself from 1st October 2015). It is this zone that SEG proposes to concentrate energy and resources.

SEG can envisage a Mediterranean programme including North Africa emerging from key relationships that have already been established – what is needed is funding and local leadership. Wetlands International Europe may be able to help with their extensive networks.

With regard to the Baltic there are possibilities to build on the great work going on in Sweden and Denmark.

What is needed is an EU sponsored programme to support development and coordination between member states.

The slide below was prepared for the 5th Anniversary celebrations at Fishmongers Hall



5.0. Immediate Strategy – Build SEG into a European body

Strengthen reinforce and expand the SEG approach by electing leaders from within SEG to work with the SEG Chairman on the three SEG themes – Science, Conservation and the Industry

- Leader from Scientist
- Leader from Conservationist and NGO community
- Leader from the Industry and Fishery

This group would meet with the Chairman through teleconference or meetings on a monthly basis and report back to the SEG Group meeting on a minimum 6 monthly basis. Their first task would be to develop this outline plan into a more detailed one.

Governance

Whilst SEG works on a consensus basis it has found it useful to regularly agree the voting members (in case a vote is needed and called) but always maintaining the one third balance between Science, Conservation and the Industry.

The following names are proposed and nominated - a total of 15 votes with no one country to hold a majority.

Each of the three groups to elect their leader to work with the Chairman.

Voting Name	Science / Cons / Industry	Organisation	Deputy
Andrew Kerr (no vote)	Chairman		
1. Brian Knights	Science (UK)	Independent	
2. Adrian Pinder	Science (UK)	Bournemouth Univ	TBA from BU
3. Paul Coulson	Science (UK)	IFM	Iain Turner
4. Miran Aprahamian	Science (UK)	Independent	Patrick Prouzet
5. Willem Dekker	Science (Sweden)	SLU	Hakkan Wickstrom
1. Barry Bendall	Conservation (UK)	Rivers Trust	Alistair Maltby(RT)
2. Alison Debney	Conservation (Europe)	ZSL	Stephen Mowat
3. David Bunt	Conservation IFM (UK)	The SEG Standard	
4. Arne Koops	Conservation (Germany)	DvB restocking	
5. TBA	Conservation (Europe)		
1. Alex Koelewijn	Industry (Holland)	DUPAN	Jac Tijssen
2. Richard Fordham	Industry (Sweden)	SSE	Morten L
3. Peter Wood	Industry (UK)	UKGE	Peter Neusinger
4. Marc-Adrien	Consultant (France)	Ecology	Didier Moreau
5. Alexander Wever	Consultant (Germany)	Aal Initiative	Gert Gotting

The elections of the three leaders will be organised by the Chairman and come into effect from the 1st October 2015.

Composition of the Independent SEG Standard panel

The Panel is formed exclusively from scientists and conservationists (no one with a commercial interest) it is Chaired by David Bunt. Its remit is to oversee the assessment process and consider the recommendations made to it by an approved assessor

working for an assessment body (MacAlister Elliott Consulting). The SEG Chairman's role is to ensure the independence of the panels.

The Panel members are

David Bunt (Chair)	IFM, EA
Matt Gollock	Eel Scientist ZSL Marine (and IUCN Eel listing chair)
Brian Knights	Eel Scientist retired (ICES)
Chris Leftwich	Fishmongers Company QA
Patrick Prouzet	Eel Scientist retired (ICES) France
Kurt Buchmann	Eel Scientist Denmark

Others – David Bunt is making approaches to include other countries

Alan Walker and Miran Aprahamian Eel Scientist ICES Member (observers and founders)

6.0. Setting Directional Objectives (next 5 years)

- 6.1. To organise and mature SEG's governance and structures as one European entity**
- 6.2. To win funding to achieve SEG's aim**
- 6.3. To develop the communication network across Europe so that the SEG message is heard, believed and acted upon**
- 6.4. To enable, coordinate and expand sound eel scientific research**
- 6.5. To build and develop conservation programmes with partners throughout the eel's natural range (CS, schools, habitats, translocation etc)**
- 6.6. To promote sustainable fisheries and commercial supply chains in the major countries concentrating on the 'Atlantic' focus first**
- 6.7. To achieve ISEAL accreditation for the SEG Standard, its governance and complementary programmes**

7.0. Chairman to work with Sector Leaders and Panel Chairman to develop plans

- 7.1. European NGO
- 7.2. European Eel Science
- 7.3. European Eel Fishery and Industry
- 7.4. SEG Standards Panel

8.0. Finance Plan

In the coming months several projects will come to fruition that will enable detailed Budgets to be developed. These include the Alternative Measures scheme in England and Wales. The EMFF (European Maritime and Fisheries Fund) 5 year programme across Europe starts from September 2015.

More work is needed before meaningful Budgets can be developed.

8.0. European SCIENCE (Theme to be developed around coordination and focus)

9.0. European CONSERVATION (theme to be further developed)

Building a European NGO Network alongside UK one starting with the relationship with Wetlands International European Association

Wetlands International European Association

n°	Country	Original name	Name in EN or FR	Active in work programme (Yes/no)
1	Spain	Centro Ibérico de Restauración Fluvial	Iberian Centre for River Restoration	Yes
2	Germany	EuroNatur Stiftung	EuroNatur Foundation	Yes
3	Poland	Centrum Ochrony Mokradel	Centre for Wetland Protection	Yes
4	France	Fondation Tour du Valat	Tour du Valat Foundation	Yes

5	UK	Sustainable Eel Group	Sustainable Eel Group	Yes
6	UK	The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust	The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust	Yes
7	UK	Zoological Society of London	Zoological Society of London	Yes
8	Italy	Centro Italiano per la Riqualficazione Fluviale	Italian Centre for River Restoration	Yes

Job Spec – Development Officer with WETLANDS International Europe

Background

The rivers, waterways and wetlands of Europe have been heavily engineered with 100,000's of barriers, obstructions, water pumps and hydro's and one major and unintended consequence has been to block and severely disrupt the movement and migration of freshwater fish.

Progress to correct this has been called for at EU level through several policies and is within the WFD, Habitats directive and other regulations including the species specific Eel Regulation.

Whilst the intention is clear at EU level the implementation at member state level has been very slow and fragmented – in most countries the actions have barely started or have been repeatedly postponed.

Implementation needs coherence and to maximise effectiveness of precious resources there needs to be focus on a whole river system rather than a dispersed and sporadic intervention.

The Netherlands and UK have started their programmes of opening up river systems and have developed technologies both for planning and implementation. There is little coherence between these work programmes let alone to other countries that share the different sections of the same rivers.

The Eel is chosen as a flagship species.

Purpose

To build momentum and coherence to a programme of unblocking rivers to enable fish migration, especially eels

Objectives

1. To review the separate methodologies and facilitate a common approach to planning between the 'habitats model of England and Wales and the 'Road map' in the Dutch Delta
2. To extend this planning tool to other rivers in other countries using the Wetlands International Europe partners

3. To build implementation alliances both within Wetlands International Europe and outside to commercial organisations like water and power companies so that the targeted rivers programmes are unblocked and fish passage is achieved.
4. To focus energies and resources to maximise effectiveness and counter dispersion of effort
5. To be able to guide the development of supporting projects that deliver the programme of many years and in many member states
6. To play a full role in communicating the programme to both external audiences and internal partners

Knowledge and Competence

1. Strong communication and facilitation skills ideally speaking several languages, English essential
2. Conservation background essential and preferably a working knowledge of policy and an understanding of marine and freshwater ecosystems
3. A natural team player and alliance builder who can see opportunity and mobilise partners into action

10.0. COMMERCIAL (Theme to be worked up)

11.0. Conclusion

The founding phase of SEG is now over we are established and credible. The next phase is going to be one of expansion and maturity.

In some ways the founding phase was easy because the European eel 'culture' (the human enjoyment of the eel) was under such grave threat that it served as a prime source of energy and purpose.

This maturing phase is going to be hard in different ways and unity will need to be carefully nurtured and maintained.

