

## Minutes: *Nephrops* Principle 2 meeting

Meeting Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

Location: Teams

Attendees	Organisation
AH: Adam Holland	Sea Source
AB: Andrew Brown	Macduff Shellfish
AC: Annika Clements	Ulster Wildlife Trust
BH: Barry Harland	Whitby Seafoods
BC: Ben Collier	Northern Ireland Gear Trials
CD: Calum Duncan	Scottish Environment Link
CMo: Cameron Moffat	Young's Seafood
CM: Carlos Mesquita	Marine Scotland Science
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff Shellfish
CJ: Clara Johnston	Scottish Environment Link
DW: Daniel Whittle (Chair)	Whitby Seafood
DD: David Donnan	NatureScot
EW: Elaine Whyte	Community Inshore Fisheries Alliance
EB: Ewen Bell	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon
GB: Giles Bartlett	Whitby Seafood
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council
KK: Katie Keay	Marine Stewardship Council
KC: Kenny Coull	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
ML: Mathieu Lundy	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
MS: Matthew Spencer	Marine Stewardship Council
MP: Mike Park	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
SSM: Sally Stewart-Moore	Seafish
SM: Simon Macdonald	West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
SD: Steph Davidson	Associated Seafoods
RG: Roy Griffin	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
WD: William Davies	Hilton Seafoods
BL: Bill Lart	Seafish
<b>Observer</b>	
MF: Mike Fitzpatrick	Verifact

### Purpose of the meeting

This call was an opportunity for the Steering Group to review progress made against each of the Principle 2 actions in the *Nephrops* Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) action plan, and to better understand the new social requirements of FisheryProgress.org. The Steering Group welcomed Mike Fitzpatrick to observe today's meeting and consider alignment between this FIP and the Irish FIP.

**Agenda Item 1: Review of this year's main action points**

FN presented the latest progress on Principle 2 actions in the *Nephrops* FIP from the Benchmarking Tracking tool. Expected score changes between Year 2 and 3 are as follows:

- An improvement from <SG60 to SG60-79 for primary species outcome in the West of Scotland (WoS) and Irish Sea for whiting and cod.
- An improvement from <SG60 to SG60-79 for management for cod in the WoS.
- An improvement from <SG60 to SG60-79 for endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species outcome across all areas (North Sea, WoS, Irish Sea) with trawl gear.
- A score change from <SG60 to SG60-79 is expected across all trawled areas in habitat outcome.
- A score change from <SG60 to SG60-79 is expected for creel in secondary species management as a result of the alternative measures paper.

*Discussion*

FN explained the trawl and creel habitat impact research by Bangor University would include a review of work already undertaken in the area, such as the ICES Working Group on Fisheries Benthic Impact and Trade-offs. This research will be crucial for score habitat performance indicator score changes. A more comprehensive map of the fishery footprint will be produced, and a review of current management measures undertaken. Completion of this research is likely to increase the habitat scores from SG60 to SG60-79. JP added that the habitat actions attract attention from external stakeholders and it is important the work produced is robust enough to withstand scrutiny.

FN also explained that the recent alternative measures report will need updating to include a review of creel gear and may benefit from BL's research on cetacean entanglement with creel gear. DD noted the Scottish Entanglement Alliance Project, funded by EMFF, is in its initial phase of development and may contribute information on alternative measures. The project will gather information on the nature and extent of entanglement incidents and conduct workshops with fishermen with experience of entanglements.

***Actions from Item 1:***

1. BL to add creel gear to the alternative measures review.

**Agenda Item 2: FisheryProgress.org social policy**

FisheryProgress.org has recently introduced a new human rights and social responsibility policy which will be phased in over the course of the next year for all FIPs on FisheryProgress.org. It is important the Steering Group understands the new requirements as members will need to provide information to comply with the policy.

*Overview:*

- The Steering Group will have to sign up to a code of conduct, which the Secretariat can coordinate with agreement from members.
- There is a requirement to provide a vessel list for each FIP.
- All vessels and fishers involved in the FIP should be aware of rights, and grievance mechanism in place to lodge issues.
- A self-evaluation of the FIP needs to be undertaken, and if any risk is identified then the FIP will have to deliver a risk assessment plan.

The risk assessment criteria:

- There is transshipment of products and/or fishers.
- The FIP has one or more vessels with a significant migrant workforce (defined as 25% or more of the fishers not from the vessel's flag state).
- The FIP has one or more vessels where the fishers are not allowed on shore every 90 days.
- The fishery has a known instance of forced labour, child labour or human trafficking abuse within the past four years.
- The FIP does not have enough information to determine if it meets the criteria above.

Next steps for the FIP:

- Secretariat to circulate Code of Conduct with the Steering Group.
- Steering Group input on FIP self-assessment.
- Draft a vessel list for the FIP.
- Secretariat to arrange full presentation on the policy from FisheryProgress.org.

#### *Discussion*

JP explained that FisheryProgress.org is benchmarking its social policy against the requirements of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) 188 Fishing Convention. ILO188 was ratified in 2019 by the UK government.

DW welcomed any concerns connected with the social policy requirements. WD commented that sectors in the industry often have >25% migrant labour, and therefore the Steering Group should start considering how to handle the risk assessment. WD believed there was the internal expertise to conduct the work and the Secretariat agreed to review the guidance from FisheryProgress.org on the risk assessor experience requirements. WD suggested scheduling a call between the Secretariat and Hilton Seafood to discuss an approach for the social policy risk assessment, as WD is on the Steering Group of the Seafood Ethical Action Alliance and has some experience in social policy.

CP suggested Producer Organisations, membership organisations and client groups of certified fisheries should begin the process of compiling a vessel list. MP noted the recent checks conducted by Maritime and Coastguard Agency have focused purely on social policy, so this is becoming an increasingly important topic.

#### ***Actions from Item 2:***

2. Secretariat to confirm that ILO 188 and the Human Rights at Sea assessment are being benchmarked against the FP.org social policy requirements.
3. Producer Organisations and membership groups to start compiling a vessel list of members participating in the FIP.
4. Secretariat and WD to review the current social policy requirements and discuss potential approaches for the *Nephrops* FIP.

#### **Agenda Item 3: Primary species stock status updates**

There was an action to review whiting and cod as primary species. ICES had recently released updated stock assessments for several key primary species in the FIP and FN provided an update of the findings to the Steering Group.

## Stock status updates for whiting

### *West of Scotland*

- Fishing pressure is below  $F_{MSY}$  and spawning-stock size is above  $MSY B_{trigger}$ ,  $B_{pa}$  and  $B_{lim}$ .
- The 2021 stock benchmark moved from Category 5 to Category 1, with updated information on the revised catch and survey data, biological parameters, fishery selectivity and reference points now available.
- Mesh size increased from 100m to 120mm, with large square mesh panels installed.
- Score change from <60 to SG80.

### *Irish Sea*

- Fishing pressure has declined since 2015 but is showing a recent increase. ICES advise zero catch in 2022 – 2023.
- Selective gear has reduced whiting discards, though they remain high relative to landings.
- The Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) is well below  $B_{lim}$ , resulting in the score remaining at >SG60.

### *North Sea*

- The stock scores SG80, so no advice is provided.

## Stock status updates for cod

### *West of Scotland*

- No further update since June 2020 advice.  $F$  is above  $F_{lim}$  so the score remains <SG60.

### *Irish Sea*

- The 2021 biomass index is below average for 2020 – 2021.
- The reference points previously defined for the stock are no longer considered appropriate, so an RBF approach may be required.
- The ICES 2020 qualitative evaluation considers the stock to be decreasing, so the score remains <SG60.

### *North Sea*

- Stock is below  $B_{lim}$ , with SSB at its lowest levels. Fishing pressure is below  $F_{lim}$  and  $F_{pa}$ , but above  $F_{MSY}$ .
- The score remains at SG60-79 as there is effective management in place to ensure the fishery is not hindering recovery.

### *Discussion*

BL offered to provide technical surveys that could further inform the score status of WoS cod and Irish Sea whiting, in addition to the latest ICES advice.

AB highlighted that the North Sea cod assessment is too general to accommodate for the spatial disparity of cod populations. AB believed this is detrimental to the *Nephrops* fishery in the north, where the cod stock is in a better state than in the south. ICES has a plan to address the spatial disparity in cod, though results of this programme are not expected for a few years.

KC highlighted the development of a new consortium (the North Sea Cod Alliance) comprised of non-political industry representatives from North Sea member states, chaired by MP. The consortium wrote to ICES about the assumptions underpinning the 2021 advice, and perceived inadequate surveys used to support the advice. The letter offered assistance on conducting trawl surveys, and a proposal for a symposium on the cod fishery, which is expected to be taken forward over the next six months.

DW noted from a call with Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) that cod management measures undertaken by the *Nephrops* fishery are not having a significant impact on the stock, presumably due to the minimal harvest rates of ~0.01%, implying the issue lays elsewhere.

BC noted that the latest Northern Ireland gear trials reduced capture of smaller whiting compared to the control (SELTRA gear). BC believed implementation across the fleet might be possible due to the results and fishermen's support. RG noted that legal changes to gear requirements can be made quickly by putting the gear technical measures within a license condition. If the gear is better than the current legislated gear then RG believes there will be a mechanism available to avoid legal proceedings slowing progress.

#### ***Actions from Item 3:***

1. BL to forward the link to the technical surveys to FN for West of Scotland cod and Irish sea whiting that can be reviewed alongside the ICES advice.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Secondary species**

Poseidon had an action to include species identified in the recently conducted Cefas survey in the Productivity and Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) for secondary species in TR1 and TR2 gear. The additional species were all categorised as low to medium risk. An action remains to document the management plans for these species in the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and assess whether any additional management needs to be implemented. This is a desk-based exercise, that BL volunteered to complete. KC noted that some species on the list are managed, and a wheelhouse guide exists for ray species, and is available to the *Nephrops* fishery.

#### ***Actions from Item 4:***

1. BL to document the management approaches for the secondary species.
2. SFSAG to provide the demersal stocks recertification recommendations when published to support BL in documenting the species management approaches.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Endangered, Threatened and Protected species**

##### **Interaction log and Clean Catch App:**

At the last Steering Group meeting, FN presented a draft interaction log to the group. This was trialled on a scallop vessel in June, and feedback provided to the Secretariat. The Secretariat has also been in contact with the Clean Catch UK App developers, which was identified by the Steering Groups as an option for recording ETP interactions in the fishery. Macduff offered to trial the App once skippers were provided with a brief on how it works.

There are alternative apps designed to track non-target species interactions that are available (e.g. BATmap in Scotland) which the Steering Group should also be aware of. The Secretariat requested Steering Group members to get in touch if they had questions about the Clean Catch App.

#### **Wheelhouse guide:**

To aid skippers in their identification of ETP species a wheelhouse guide is being developed which aims to cover the likely ETP species encountered in the *Nephrops*, scallop, plaice and lemon sole FIPs. A sub-group has been formed to deliver this wheelhouse guide.

#### *Discussion:*

CD suggested aligning the use of Remote Electronic Monitoring with the ETP interaction log. BL recalled Cefas attempted this and reported some difficulty. SS commented that many experts voluntarily get involved with verifying species from images submitted to iRecord, iNaturalist recording tools. The Steering Group agreed it would be good to get an update from Mike Kaiser on his PhD position working with Artificial Intelligence to monitor bycatch.

#### **Actions from Item 5:**

1. Steering Group to contact the Secretariat if they wish to join the Clean Catch App trial.
2. Secretariat to request update from Mike Kaiser on his research project using AI to identify bycatch.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Ecosystems**

In March 2021 a Scale Intensity Consequence Analysis (SICA) workshop was conducted for the *Nephrops* FIP to better understand some of the wider ecosystem impacts of the fishery. FN presented an overview of the SICA results, explaining that quantitative numbers are required to support score justifications for recovery times and consequences. Overall, the SICA report showed that the ecosystem outcome PI meets SG60 and aligned with the pre-assessment findings in 2019. This should be reviewed when iVMS data for <12m vessels is available. VMS data from >12m vessels in 2017 already showed very clear delineation and demarcation of the fishery on burrowed mud habitats.

FN explained that reducing the impact to up to 5% change in characteristic, and recovery in five years, could improve the score to SG60-79, as well as further work to identify which species and habitats are most impacted by trawl gear. The detailed analysis of the habitat and fishery footprint planned under the habitats PI will further determine which ecosystem characteristics are being interacted with.

EW asked what approach is taken if Priority Marine Features are 'placed' in an area, such as oyster resettlement projects (as opposed to wild populations). EW offered to send Poseidon details on Scottish oyster restoration projects occurring near fisheries so an informed assessment can be provided. DD explained that the oysters will not be a PMF, but consideration for local management could be needed. CD noted interaction between oysters and the *Nephrops* fishery may be limited due to differences in habitat preferences, but may be a concern for scallop grounds.

#### **Actions from Item 6:**

1. EW to send Poseidon details on Scottish oyster restoration projects occurring near fisheries so an informed response can be provided.

## Agenda Item 7: Habitats

Since the last meeting the Secretariat has continued to apply for funding for the habitat impact research at Bangor University, and is hopeful that a combination of additional Steering Group contributions and the Ocean Stewardship Fund (OSF) will be secured in the next couple of weeks.

JP provided an update from Eleanor Michie on the MPA mapping for fishermen project conducted by Kingfisher. The project is developing a database of management in all UK MPAs for all gear types. It is on track for completion in October 2021 and the outputs of the project will address Action 9d.

iVMS rollout is understood to be starting across the Devolved Administrations. Information is welcome from Steering Group members on this timeline.

### *Discussion:*

BL offered to share Claire Szostec's report and accompanying dataset from Bangor University on seabed penetration when a component of gear is modified, once it is published.

BC is working with Ulster University to attach pressure sensors to the footrope. It has been tested in the USA but not published. The result should give more evidence of the interaction between the gear and seabed when being towed, and BC offered to share the results from the Irish Sea when available. AC supported the importance of gathering this data, and suggested applying for funding to roll out that technology to other areas and gears.

AC also raised that resuspension of sediment and carbon release from trawling the seabed is a popular concern, so it would be useful if the gear study could answer how much sediment is actually resuspended. BL noted Heriot-Watt and Bangor University have a PhD position lined up to look at a carbon footprint study in the North Sea, co-supervised by Jan Hiddink.

### *Actions from Item 7:*

1. BL to send the Bangor University gear modification report to the Secretariat.
2. Steering Group to share any updates on the iVMS roll-out timeline.
3. BC to share the results from the footrope pressure sensor trials in the Irish Sea with the Secretariat when the trials are complete.

## Any Other Business

GB is leading on Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for the FIP and will reach out to the respective scientific bodies in the Steering Group to review elements of the report that require their input. CD asked if the FMP will complement the requirements of the Fisheries Act. JP noted that the FMP is requirement by the MSC if the fishery is wishing to enter MSC assessment, and that other FIPs have worked closely with government departments to ensure there is no duplication of effort. CP and BL are working closely with Marine Scotland to ensure alignment for Round 2 Scallop FIP. CP noted that Marine Scotland is mainly kept up to date on the FIP's FMP development through the Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG), and Marine Scotland is part of the wider co-management group that the SICG is evolving into. Content from the scallop FIP FMP will be brought into the newly proposed National Shellfish Plan.

EW asked if the Steering Group was feeding into the Scottish *Nephrops* working group (SNWG), which it is through DW, though there has not been a detailed update from the Scottish Government. EW noted that the Scottish management forums are primarily where the Scottish Government are taking

their policy forward, so it is important that representation from the FIPs remain present in those groups. CP added that Jennifer Mouat sits on the *Nephrops* and scallop FIPs as well as the East coast IFG, ensuring there is communication between the FIP and the IFGs.

MF thanks the group for allowing him to join the meeting and added shared communications between this FIP and the Irish FIP could be mutually beneficial, especially on technical measures and bycatch reduction.

## Meeting Closes

12:00

Actions Arising	Responsibility
<b><u>Review of this year's main action points</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BL to add creel gear to the alternative measures review.</li> </ul>	Bill Lart
<b><u>FisheryProgress.org social policy</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secretariat to confirm that ILO 188 and the Human Rights at Sea assessment are being benchmarked against the FP.org social policy requirements.</li> <li>Producer Organisations and membership groups to start compiling a vessel list of members participating in the FIP.</li> <li>Secretariat and WD to review the current social policy requirements and discuss potential approaches for the <i>Nephrops</i> FIP.</li> </ul>	The Secretariat  Producer Organisations and membership groups  The Secretariat and Will Davies
<b><u>Primary species stock status updates</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BL to forward the link to the technical surveys to FN for West of Scotland cod and Irish sea whiting that can be reviewed alongside the ICES advice.</li> </ul>	Bill Lart
<b><u>Secondary species</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BL to document the management approaches for the secondary species.</li> <li>SFSAG to provide the demersal stocks recertification recommendations when published to support BL in documenting the species management approaches.</li> </ul>	Bill Lart  SFSAG
<b><u>Endangered, Threatened and Protected species</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering Group to contact the Secretariat if they wish to join the Clean Catch App trial.</li> <li>Secretariat to request update from Mike Kaiser on his research project using AI to identify bycatch.</li> </ul>	The Steering Group  The Secretariat
<b><u>Ecosystems</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EW to send Poseidon details on Scottish oyster restoration projects occurring near fisheries so an informed response can be provided.</li> </ul>	Elaine Whyte



**Habitats**

- BL to send the Bangor University gear modification report to the Secretariat.
- Steering Group to share any updates on the iVMS roll-out timeline.
- BC to share the results from the footrope pressure sensor trials in the Irish Sea with the Secretariat when the trials are complete.

Bill Lart

The Steering Group  
Ben Collier