

## Project UK Stage Two: Environment sub-group (Facilitated by the MSC)

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2020 14.30 – 16.00

Skype

### Attending

AB: Andrew Brown	Macduff	LB: Lynda Blackadder	Marine Scotland Science
AC: Annika Clements	Seafish NI	MF: Mairi Fenton	Heriot-Watt University
BL: Bill Lart	Seafish	MP: Mike Park	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
BS: Bryce Stewart	University of York	MS: Matt Spencer	MSC
CB: Cass Bromley	NatureScot	SD: Stephanie Davidson	Associated Seafoods
CC: Clarus Chu	WWF	SS: Sam Stone	Scot LINK
CM: Carrie McMinn	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute	WD: William Davies	Hilton Seafood
CMe: Carlos Mesquita	Marine Scotland Science		
CMo: Cameron Moffat	Young's	<b>Apologies:</b>	
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff	Anne McLay	Marine Scotland Science
DD: David Donnan	NatureScot	Jim Portus	South Western Fish Producers Organisation
DW: Daniel Whittle	Whitby Seafood	Michel Kaiser	Heriot-Watt University
EW: Elaine Whyte	Clyde Fishermen's Association	Malcolm Morrison	Scottish Fishermen's Federation
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon		
FD: Femke de Boer	Scottish White Fish Producers Association	<b>Guests:</b>	
HS: Hayley Swanlund	WWF	LL: Lara Leonard	University of York
JP: Jo Pollett	MSC	BSc: Brooke Schlipf	University of York
KC: Kenny Coull	Scottish White Fish Producers Association		
KK: Katie Keay	MSC		

### Introduction

Two Steering Group meetings had been planned for May 2020, but these were postponed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic affecting so many individuals and organisations in different ways. The purpose of the sub-group meeting was to discuss and progress the environmental actions for both Stage 2 FIPs (*Nephrops* and scallop), despite the postponement of the full Steering Group meetings.

This group was formed nine months ago to focus solely on the environmental actions in the Stage 2 Action Plans. Usually, the sub-group meetings are held remotely as phone calls and are only attended by the sub-group members, but today's meeting was open to all Steering Group members in the absence of the regular meetings.

## Scallop - secondary species

The scallop Action Plan (AP) has several actions in relation to bycatch, some of which were reported on at this meeting. BL introduced his work on alternative measures - a review of bycatch and discards in the scallop fishery with recommendations of how these issues can be addressed. The report will include information gathered from BL's previous experience with the fishing industry, previous industry-led research, and information from the MSC capacity toolkit book. BL asked other Steering Group members (BS, in particular) to contribute to the document. BL will distribute the report to the wider group once further edits have been made.

### Actions:

- **BL to work with BS to complete the content of the report, and to add the Project UK logo; once complete, BL to distribute the report to the Steering Group for comment**

## Scallop - total catch data

The milestone for Action 6a was to review existing catch information, which had been addressed by gathering available data from Marine Scotland Science's (MSS) dredge research. LB informed the group that the MSS research vessel uses a scientific survey dredge on one side, and a commercial dredge on the other. The surveys provide data on scallop size (whether undersized or above the landing size). LB stated this work would only show indications of presence, absence and diversity of bycatch species. The data collected would not be defined as total catch data as the scientific survey gear is only designed to catch scallops, it is not representative of the catch from commercial dredges. MSS does not have knowledge of the selectivity of the gear on scallops and the other species.

MSS is also still working on a bycatch paper and progress has been made recently on writing up the report. LB hoped to be able to share this report with the group soon.

FN informed the Steering Group that bycatch and total catch data was needed for an MSC assessment to ascertain the main and minor species being caught in the fishery, and that to do this having weight data is critical. LB confirmed that MSS is working on gathering weight data and that, for most species, length-weight keys are already available. However, MSS does not have all of them (queen scallop, for example), and asked the group if anyone had any information on this. BS mentioned he may have something and recommended speaking with Peter Duncan from the Isle of Man (IoM). CM stated that she had length-weight keys for 6a she could share. LB asked if she could send over a list of missing length-weight keys over and CM fill in what she can.

To collect total catch data, it would be necessary to have observers on board vessels. MSS does not have plans for this at the moment, so the steering Group will consider how to address the collection of total catch data at the next environment sub-group meeting.

### Actions:

- **LB to share list of species needing length-weight keys with BS and CM**
- **BS to share length-weight keys with LB and contact Peter Duncan for additional length-weight keys**

## Scallop - data gaps and ICES request

### Data gaps

Action 4 of the UK scallop Action Plan requires the Steering Group to review current available data to establish where there are any gaps or uncertainties. LB said the biggest data gap in the work being undertaken on UK scallops is that the surveying work undertaken by MSS is only in Scottish waters, and this will not be representative of the entire fishing area for this FIP. Additionally, only a relatively small area is surveyed, which is often returned to, and MSS does not have data on habitat ground.

LB stressed the need for industry participation in gathering catch composition data. It can be difficult to get industry buy-in for this work as it is a contentious issue for some skippers to have CCTV cameras onboard their vessels. CP referred to the Bangor habitat research for the Channel scallop FIP, which included cameras on vessels, and suggested that this approach could be replicated to collect more information on catch composition in the fishery. The group agreed to investigate a follow-on project to the Channel work, and CP and FB will suggest this topic for the next SWFPA scallop committee meeting agenda. Currently MSS doesn't have the resources to take this type of work forward. BS commented that the University of York did a trial in the Channel using cameras that were able to identify a range of species – but not all of them – and it was hard to get quantitative information from that trial. The resultant report would be available soon and BS will circulate it with the Steering Group in due course.

### ICES requests

FN informed the group that once all the available information had been documented by the Steering Group, it might be possible to ask ICES to review any remaining knowledge gaps. LB noted that there are formal processes if the group wants to make a request of the ICES scallop Working Group to focus on bycatch. The ICES scallops working group terms of reference are fixed for the next three years.

#### Actions:

- **BS to circulate Channel camera trial paper to the Steering Group when it is available**
- **CP and FB to approach the SWFPA scallop committee about potential involvement in a bycatch project, and to table as an agenda item for the next SWFPA SC meeting**
- **LB to send ICES research request form to secretariat**

## Scallop – Endangered, threatened and protected species

### Risk assessment

This action is being undertaken by a Masters student from the University of York, Lara Leonard (LL). Her project aimed at investigating endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species interactions with the scallop fisheries in the North Sea, Irish Sea and West of Scotland. LL intends to conduct a fisheries effort overlay in the Unit of Assessment (UoA) and hotspot analysis of areas with high ETP interaction.

LL presented her work so far. She has done extensive literature research and is in contact with BS and MS to determine the best risk assessment methodology. The biggest hinderance so far has been obtaining data, and she noted that she is awaiting Marine Scotland data to measure fishing effort. Similarly, the MMO had intended to send data but were having issue handling data requests. These delays are potentially a result of the impacts of coronavirus. LL had also been in touch with the Shark Trust, the relevant ICES WG, and Cefas for spawning ground data. FN recommended LL have a call with BS to ensure all available data is pulled together before progressing further with MMO and Cefas.

## ETP list finalisation

This work was originally covered in the pre-assessment and developed further by WWF, with input from JNCC and SNH. The list requires industry review, to ensure its accuracy based on their experience with interactions in the fishery. EW highlighted the importance of gathering industry input early in the process and the Steering Group agreed that this would be a priority.

FN asked DD about the designation of Priority Marine Features (PMFs) as a vulnerable marine ecosystem (VME), or individual ETP species. DD said that organisms such as sea fan and sponge communities are included in the PMF list as habitat biotopes, and so would need to be assessed as habitat VMEs in the MSC Standard. DD recommend doing the same for sea-pens and borrowing megafauna in the *Nephrops* fishery. FN acknowledged that there was no definitive correct answer and would use the group's justification here for the allocation of a PMF as a habitat rather than an ETP species. EW noted that PMFs are still being rolled out. FN noted that the first step for this Action is to determine an ETP list before being able to determine whether any species on that list interact with the fishery.

AC informed the group that PMFs also have legal status in Northern Ireland and were reviewed as part of the Marine Conservation Zone designation. More information is available on the Daera website. BL added that ICES publish data online twice a year for many species such as common skate (International Bottom Trawl Surveys), but this data may not be relevant to dredge gear.

### Actions:

- **BL to share ICES elasmobranch WG work and ICES trawl survey reports with FN**
- **AC to share information on PMFs from Daera website with FN**
- **FN to review ETP list with DD to address outstanding questions; and send to LL once complete**
- **LL to arrange a call with BS and FN in relation to generating a master ETP list**

## Scallop - habitats

This action is being undertaken by a PhD student from Heriot Watt University, Mairi Fenton (MF). The research will review global best practice approaches to habitat management, ascertain relative benthic status of habitats overlapping with the fishery, and improve the knowledge of vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs) in the region through consultation with local stakeholders. BS stated that he is supervising MF and LL, so they will be able to liaise closely and share data.

## Scallop and *Nephrops* - ecosystems

There is an action for Year 1 -2 to conduct a Scale Intensity Consequence Analysis (SICA), and this is being led by BL. A SICA analysis reviews a selection of components, including temporal and spatial scale, that are critical in maintaining ecosystem structure and function. There is already data available on ecosystem components from other MSC assessments in the same area. The FIP Principle 2 actions will provide additional information for consideration during the SICA. A questionnaire is being developed to obtain a range of expert perspectives on the ecosystem interactions of the fishery, and once this has been circulated, a workshop will be organised to discuss the results. CC and SS confirmed that WWF and ScotLink, respectively, could review the draft questionnaire.

The group discussed the scale of the SICA, as *Nephrops* functional units (FU) do not align with scallop populations areas. It would be difficult to conduct a SICA at FU level, as organisms in a FU interact with a much wider ecosystem area. BL stressed the importance of keeping the SICA consistent across the

scallop and *Nephrops* FIPs, as they cover the same sea areas. The group just needs to provide justification for why the SICA is conducted at a certain level.

**Actions:**

- **FN to share the SICA questionnaire to BL and SNH for their input, and share with identified experts once the questionnaire is complete**
- **CC and SS/LINK to review SICA questionnaire if needed**
- **FN to update Action Plan to show Seafish is leading the SICA work**

## *Nephrops* - primary and secondary species

FN presented the landing statistics at a FU level based on MMO iFISH 2018 data and ICES advice on the rate of discards for this fishery. AB noted the absence of spurdog, demonstrating the need for industry knowledge of the fishery to contribute to the understating of the catch profile. DW added he was surprised no monkfish was listed in the Irish Sea. FN pointed out that there were no main species landed in the Firth of Forth and that little mackerel was found across the FUs. CME explained that Marine Scotland Science (MSS) catch estimations do not take a holistic approach, so work conducted on *Nephrops* only focusses on *Nephrops*, and would not consider other species such as whiting or haddock.

BL offered to provide input on whether he thought any species were missing. FN will review other MSC assessments for this area to further inform the main primary and secondary species. DW suggested ICES observer data could be used to help progress this work.

There is no target fishery for *Nephrops* in FU10 (Noup) so the landings data comes from a fishery predominately targeting whitefish. FN asked the group whether they wanted to remove FU10 from the Unit of Assessment (UoA), but the group agreed that this could cause traceability issues, particularly if all other FUs become MSC certified.

CME stated that FU 11 and 12 have relatively large creel fisheries (approximately 20-25% of total catch) and asked whether this had been considered. FN explained that creel and trawl catch profiles are considered separately so there would be another catch composition table for creel. The creel data is complicated as landings are recorded as generic 'pot' gear, rather than specifying creel, crab or lobster pot. EW said certain FUs have large creel components that interact with other species including cod.

EW asked how gear selectivity was being considered and noted that it is important to include creel fishermen, as some do catch fish as well. FN explained that selectivity would lead to a smaller quantity of non-target species in the catch, and this would be reflected in the landings data. Bycatch from creel gear should be low due to the high survivability of crab and lobster. More information on creel catch composition should be available on iFISH. Cefas have access to iFISH, and Ewen Bell (Cefas) sits on this Steering Group so may be able to help get hold of anonymised iFISH data by trip.

**Actions**

- **FN to remove witch from 'main' species in South Minch, and to add spurdog where industry has identified its presence (check with AB)**
- **BL to look at primary and secondary lists and inform FN if any species are missing; and share Jonathan Aide's thesis on bycatch in *Nephrops* fishery with the secretariat**
- **FN to review other MSC assessments and EU data for more information on species lists**
- **FN to replicate catch composition work done for trawl fishery for creel gear**
- **Secretariat to explore getting access to iFISH trip data from MMO and Cefas**

## Nephrops - habitat

This action is being undertaken by a University of York Masters student, Brooke Schlipf (BSc). She will create risk assessment maps to identify FUs that are in danger of not meeting SG60 in an MSC Standard assessment due to the fisheries' impacts on the wider habitat. BSc has used ScotMap data and Defra databases, but they don't separate the data by fishery. BSc asked the group for any trip data they have access to.

EW asked whether the group has involved fishermen in the research projects, because they have extensive knowledge of the fishing grounds. She stressed that fishermen need to be part of the process, and if we do not seek their input from the start, it may result in a lack of desire to engage with Project UK further. She noted that engaging sooner rather than later will help build trust. JP said that the first year of the FIP has been about identifying the knowledge gaps in the fishery, and asked EW if she could help facilitate a meeting or communications between Project UK and the fishermen she represents. EW said she would be willing to do this but flagged the pressure many fishermen are currently facing due to coronavirus, so longer response times should be expected. DW asked about the process for verbal evidence during an MSC assessment, and FN confirmed that anecdotal evidence can be considered.

The group noted the need to engage further with Regional Inshore Fishing Group (RIFGs), and JP confirmed this is a high priority for the secretariat over the next couple of months.

### Actions:

- **BL to send final MMO benthic impacts report to Brooke**
- **All Steering Group members to send suggestions of opportunities to engage with fishermen to the secretariat**

## Close

Draft minutes will be circulated to the Steering Group in two weeks, and another meeting will be planned in the next two months.

Action	Responsibility
<b>Scallop - secondary species</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BL to work with BS to complete the content of the report, and to add the Project UK logo; once complete, BL to distribute the report to the Steering Group for comment</li></ul>	<b>BL</b>
<b>Scallop - total catch data</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LB to share list of species needing length-weight keys with BS and CM</li><li>• BS to share length-weight keys with LB and contact Peter Duncan for additional length-weight keys</li></ul>	<b>LB</b> <b>BS</b>
<b>Scallop - data gaps &amp; ICES requests</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BS to circulate Channel camera trial paper to the Steering Group when it is available</li><li>• CP and FB to approach the SWFPA Scallop Committee about potential involvement in a bycatch project, and to table as an agenda item for the next SWFPA SC meeting</li><li>• LB to send ICES research request form to secretariat</li></ul>	<b>BS</b> <b>CP &amp; FB</b> <b>LB</b>
<b>Scallop – Endangered, threatened and protected species</b>	<b>BL</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BL to share ICES elasmobranch WG work and ICES trawl survey reports with FN</li> <li>• AC to share information on PMFs from Daera website with FN</li> <li>• FN to review ETP list with DD to address outstanding questions; and send to LL once complete</li> <li>• LL to arrange a call with BS and FN in relation to generating a master ETP list</li> </ul>	<p><b>AC</b> <b>FN</b></p> <p><b>LL</b></p>
<p><b>Scallop and Nephrops - ecosystems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FN to share the SICA questionnaire to BL and SNH for their input, and share with identified experts once the questionnaire is complete</li> <li>• CC and SS/LINK to review SICA questionnaire if needed</li> <li>• FN to update Action Plan to show Seafish is leading the SICA work</li> </ul>	<p><b>FN</b></p> <p><b>CC</b> <b>FN</b></p>
<p><b>Nephrops - primary and secondary species</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FN to remove witch from 'main' species in South Minch, and to add spurdog where industry has identified its presence (check with AB)</li> <li>• BL to look at primary and secondary lists and inform FN if any species are missing; and share Jonathan Aide's thesis on bycatch in Nephrops fishery with the secretariat</li> <li>• FN to review other MSC assessments and EU data for more information on species lists</li> <li>• FN to replicate catch composition work done for trawl fishery for creel gear</li> <li>• Secretariat to explore getting access to iFISH trip data from MMO and Cefas</li> </ul>	<p><b>FN</b></p> <p><b>BL</b></p> <p><b>FN</b></p> <p><b>FN</b> <b>MSC</b></p>
<p><b>Nephrops - habitat</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BL to send final MMO benthic impacts report to Brooke</li> <li>• All Steering Group members to send suggestions of opportunities to engage with fishermen to the secretariat</li> </ul>	<p><b>BL</b></p> <p><b>All</b></p>