

Project UK Stage Two: Management Focus Group minutes (Facilitated by the Marine Stewardship Council)

Tuesday 19th May 2020, 10.00 – 11.30

Skype

Attending:		GB: Giles Bartlett	Whitby Seafoods
AC: Annika Clements	Seafish NI	JP: Jo Pollett	MSC
AJ: Aisla Jones	Co-Op	KK: Katie Keay	MSC
BL: Bill Lart	Seafish	MF: Mairi Fenton	Heriot-Watt University
CB: Cass Bromley	NatureScot	MK: Michel Kaiser	Heriot-Watt University
CM: Cameron Moffat	Young's Seafood	MM: Mike Mitchell	Young's Seafood
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff Shellfish	MP: Mike Park	Scottish White Fish Producers Association
DW: Daniel Whittle	Whitby Seafoods	MS: Matt Spencer	MSC
FB: Femke de Boer	Scottish White Fish Producers Association	WD: William Davies	Hilton Seafoods
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon Aquatic Resource Management	Apologies:	
		Melissa Tillotson	Waitrose
		Stuart McLanaghan	Seafish

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. At the request of the Steering Group, this was the first meeting of the newly set up Management Focus Group was set up. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and progress the management actions for both Stage 2 FIPs (*Nephrops* and scallop), despite the postponement of the full Steering Group meetings. Actions progressed by this focus group will be reported back to the wider Steering Group for their feedback.

The group was reminded that Project UK meetings are arranged for Steering Group members, and that calendar invites should not be forwarded to non-Steering Group members. If there are other stakeholders interested in participating in Project UK, then they are welcome to participate by following the process for new members or observers outlined in the Terms of Reference.

Nephrops - Harvest strategy

The MSC Fisheries Standard (hereafter referred to as the Standard) requires a fishery to demonstrate that there is robust management in place to ensure the sustainability of the stock. During the *Nephrops* Steering Group meeting in November 2019, FN presented Paul Medley's Harvest Strategy Development work, and attendees discussed how to implement management when stocks drop below reference points; with management by Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and effort by Functional Unit

agreed as unworkable by catchers and the wider Steering Group. The Steering Group agreed that a regional approach to management is required due to the large area covered by the FIP and the differing challenges faced by each Functional Unit. This Management Focus Group will support the development of regional management as described in the FIP Action Plan. MSC's role is as the Secretariat, and any progress needs to be made through a co-management approach, incorporating all aspects of industry and fishery managers.

The group discussed possible approaches to regional management, including:

- the spatial boundaries of the region;
- the relevant stakeholders;
- who should lead the work in each region;
- challenges that may come up; and
- realistic timelines.

CP questioned whether the management groups should be area- or issue-specific and raised concerns about duplication of effort if similar issues are occurring in different regions. MP suggested it would be a good idea to involve stakeholders outside of the Steering Group to ensure wider buy-in to management options, as if fishermen feel ownership of the decisions, they would be more willing to help progress the work. The group agreed with the motion.

MP stressed the importance of finding credible partners and that if some stakeholders do not want to participate there needs to be transparent reporting of discussions, so they are able to remain aware of developments. GB also cautioned that budgets and geographic location of meetings may limit engagement capacity.

DW asked whether these regional management groups could align with what is already stipulated in the Multi-Annual Plans (MAPs). MP suggested the regional groups should develop their own structure independently of the MAPs to ensure they are flexible enough to fit into future UK fishery management plans.

JP informed the group that the Stage 1 Steering Groups have been drafting Fishery Management Plans (FMPs), with Defra sitting in Steering Group meetings as observers so that they are aware of the discussions and can consider these as a part of developing Defra strategy. It is important for the Stage 2 FIPs to establish similar relationships with the relevant Devolved Administrations, so that government is aware of the discussions being had and to ensure alignment with their national fisheries strategies. CP added that other groups around the UK – such as the Shellfish Industry Consultation Group (SICG) – have Defra involved with the work they are conducting. The aim is to develop strong co-management, with industry indicating the management options they would like, and government signing it off or amending where appropriate.

CP also noted that the Seafish Inshore conference in Autumn 2019 showcased different management across the world, and Project UK could take a similar approach of a workshop, perhaps with an advisory group to contribute to the planning. DW approved of the advisory group concept, such as the SICG, which will provide direction for the group, and brought the conversation back to regionalisation. DW suggested groups associated with the area where people fish, for example North and South Minch. MP strongly recommended regionalising by ICES area and cautioned that breaking this work down to a Functional Unit level would result in endless meetings and participation fatigue.

The group agreed following an 'ICES area' approach would be practical, and no concerns were raised. GB asked how people who don't fish in that ICES area can influence the management of it, and also

raised concern about the cost and convenience to members of the new regional groups who are not located where the meetings are likely to be held, and thus have to spend considerable time and effort to attend.

CP referred to Project Inshore and the importance of spending time meeting fishermen to get their feedback. This Management Focus Group can make use of the Steering Group members to get input from stakeholders. MP agreed that communication was key but recommended giving skippers imagery-based information, such as charts, rather than long reports as they have limited time. MP said there would not be much point live-streaming meetings as people will join the meeting in person if they have a real interest or point to make. It is important to set out the objectives of each meeting clearly so stakeholders can make an informed decision about their involvement.

DW raised the issue of timing and what the first step looks like; would it require a large workshop or conference, and would the group be waiting for travel restrictions to lift, which could be late in 2020 or even 2021. JP reminded the group that in the FIP Action Plan this is a Year 2 - 4 action, so the group is making good progress by starting now.

CP suggested the first step could be holding a centralised workshop that assembles all regional working groups together and show cases potential management measures and how these have been applied globally. This means each group will be starting with the same information and said it won't matter if each region's approach to management varies slightly so long as the outcome is the same ie meeting the FIP action requirements. FN suggested that the group could host a webinar workshop where attendees stated their areas of interest. CP has been in online meetings where all participants are in a 'room' to start with and move off to separate 'rooms' according to interest and thought this may be a useful template.

DW asked if this online approach could be replicated for a *Nephrops* workshop and whether people involved with SICG could lead in this area. DW asked MP what his experience was like in Regional Advisory Councils. MP gave the example of chairing the North Sea Advisory Council *Nephrops* group. The *Nephrops* Long Term Management Plan was developed over seven years and set out what *Nephrops* management could look like at a Functional Unit level. Their approach was to ask fishermen that if they had to restrict fishing in that area and which measures they would implement. MP believed that technical measures were agreed for each area, but it would ultimately be up to the fleet to implement the measures.

GB noted that the UK's exit from the EU provides an opportunity for this FIP and Project UK to demonstrate what future co-management could look like. DW pointed out that there has been some engagement in this FIP from Defra and Daera, and Marine Scotland Policy officials have attended some Steering Group meetings, but the Secretariat needs to build on the relationships with the Devolved Administrations to contribute to the success of the FIP. If this group is to have any success in adopting additional management measures in the UK *Nephrops* fishery then it will need to have increased legislative involvement to ensure that plans are implementable and enforceable.

FN brought the conversation back to the MAPs, which were reviewed in the pre-assessment. The MAPs state that when stock status falls below specified levels, management measures must be implemented. However, the MAPs do not specify the which management measures will be implemented, and the MSC Standard requires management actions and reference points to be specifically agreed and documented.

DW asked whether this meeting would be the time to agree next steps and who is to lead on the regionalisation work. JP asked if he would be happy to take ownership of this action, to which DW

confirmed and offered full support for the group. JP has summarised what the group is looking to do and the issues to be addressed, which can be circulated to the group for more formal feedback. GB added that the minutes from the meeting will form a useful tool for developing plans further.

CP enquired into Seafish leading on the work, due to their involvement with Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG). DW has already been in contact with Lynn Gilmore - Head of International trade and Regions at Seafish - and she had informed him that if this group would like Seafish's involvement then we need submit a proposal. DW suggested that Seafish could help host an event, potentially in Glasgow, in late October with 30-50 attendees, if movement restrictions were lifted.

Actions:

- **JP to share a summary of proposed work with the focus group.**
- **DW to continue to work with Seafish on planning for a *Nephrops* management event, with support from the Secretariat to consider how to fund documentation of current management measures in each functional unit, and how to fund the regional workshops.**

Nephrops - Landing Obligation compliance

This action requires that the fishery can demonstrate that it complies with national and international legislation. Specifically, the *Nephrops* fishery needs to provide evidence from Marine Scotland showing the level of non-compliance of the Landing Obligation, and to find out from the Devolved Administrations what the level of observer coverage is. DW said this is an interesting area of work and noted that no one would willingly say they are not conforming to the landing obligation. FN agreed and said the best approach is to ask the Devolved Administrations as to how they are enforcing the Landing Obligation. The Secretariat will review how the Landing Obligation is being dealt with in other EU/UK MSC certified fisheries and will also speak with Marine Scotland about levels of enforcement.

MP asked whether removing the fish tails at sea is an issue due to the amount of animal that is put back after processing. CP and GB believed that it was a legal procedure and stated so it was not discarding. BL pointed out there should be records of discards under de minimis exemptions or due to high survivability of species. AC pointed out that Daera & AFBI should be contacted regarding the Landing Obligation implementation and enforcement for Functional Unit 15 (Irish Sea, West).

Actions:

- **Secretariat to review how the Landing Obligation is being addressed in EU MSC certified fisheries and share with the group.**
- **Secretariat to speak with MMO, MS, Deara and AFBI about how they are enforcing the Landing Obligation, and request any (anonymised) information on incidents of non-compliance.**

Scallop – SICG management paper

The SICG has been leading on the development of management options for the UK scallop fishery, which will contribute to FIP actions on harvest strategy and harvest control rules. FB informed the

group that there had not been any substantive change since the last Project UK meeting in November due to delays in feedback from the Devolved Administrations, who are focussing on their response to Covid-19. There are meetings planned for 20 and 22 May to discuss the paper further with the Devolved Administrations.

During the last Steering Group meeting, members identified the need to build on the management framework outlines by the SICG to understand the feasibility of implementing their suggested management options in the UK. The Secretariat worked with Steering Group members to draft a Terms of Reference (ToR) for this study and asked the group to suggest any organisations who might want to tender for it. CP asked whether the group needed to rethink funding for that research. It was originally planned for the Steering Group members to contribute a small amount of money to support the study, but Covid-19 has had an impact on the availability of funds for many organisations. CP suggested waiting for a rough estimate on cost to gauge how much the Steering Group can contribute, or alternatively submit it as a Seafood Innovation Fund (SIF) application. JP circulate to ToR to the group for comment.

MK said that Heriot-Watt would be interested in leading this study, so JP suggested a call to review the specifications and requirements.

Actions:

- **Secretariat to share the Terms of Reference for scallop management research with the Steering Group for comment.**
- **Secretariat to contact MK to discuss management research.**

Scallop - Fishery management plan review

FMP templates are being used by each of the FIPs to pull together work undertaken by the Steering Groups, to support an assessment body during the MSC certification process. The aim is to help assessor understand the thought process of the group and document everything the fishery would need for an MSC assessment. The group agreed that the best is to summarise the information available for each section and provide links or references to where the full documents can be found.

CP explained that Macduff has been leading on the FMP for the Project UK Channel scallop FIP and showed the group the latest version of the FMP. She stressed that she as Macduff was the gatekeeper of the FMP and not writing the whole document, it was an evolving doc and Steering Group members would support its development. CP asked whether the Stage 1 and 2 scallop FMPs should remain separate or merge to provide a UK-wide FMP. Both options had their respective merits. FN asked whether the Stage 1 and 2 scallop FIPs will go through MSC assessment together. If so, it would be a good idea to have a combined FMP. CP said it raised interesting questions; would the Stage 1 group want to wait, how different are the client groups and would the funding be different.

MK suggested that the consistency (or lack thereof) in compliance and enforcement would potentially jeopardise the progress of this FIP if it went to assessment. MK gave the example of known illegal fishing within an area of the Unit of Assessment (UoA) due to a lack of enforcement and little compliance with regulation. MK asked the group for their thoughts on dropping certain areas from the UoA if it is so likely that they would fail the assessment.

The role of the FIP is to identify and address the issues outlined by MK, but it will be up to the Steering Group to select which areas they want to take forward to assessment. From a market perspective it

would be better to have the whole area certified to avoid traceability issues. As a result of this, many members thought it best that the Channel scallop FIP progress to certification independently and be used as an incentive for stakeholders in the Stage 2 scallop FIP.

FN acknowledged this as a good steer and that this FIP should develop its own FMP with overlapping information copied from the Stage 1 FMP to the Stage 2 FMP. CP stressed the importance of shared responsibility of the FMP and highlighted that as the FIP progresses, the Secretariat will step back so there needs to be industry momentum carrying the work forward. CP suggested creating a master document and assigning different chapters to specific members for regular review.

CP agreed to be the main point of contact for the Stage 2 scallop FMP going forward, along with a small group of people to also take charge and add to it as the FIP develops. She suggested that the FMP is revisited at every Steering Group meeting and updated accordingly to ensure it's kept up to date. BL informed the group that this is the same approach taken by the plaice and lemon sole FIP, and it is working well. BL offered to support CP with the scallop FMP based on his experience with other Project UK FMPs. BL asked whether it would be useful for Tim Huntington (TH) to present the FMP structure to the management group.

Action:

- **Stage 2 Steering Group to develop independent FMP from Channel scallops FIP, but to transfer the overlapping content so as not to duplicate effort.**
- **CP to lead on scallop FMP, with input and support from Steering Group members, including BL.**

AOB:

CP asked for an update on Open Seas engagement with the Steering Groups. KK noted there had been some delays in finalising the documents and informed the group that a memo and communications document would be shared the following week. KK said that when she informed Open Seas that the Steering Groups had not agreed to invite them to become full members, they were disappointed but not entirely surprised. Once the Steering Groups agree an engagement strategy the Secretariat will update Open Seas. MK reminded the group that Open Seas were involved on the panel of Mairi Fenton, his PhD researcher.

CP asked for an update on engagement with the Inshore Fishing Groups (IFG) JP said this is a priority for the secretariat, particularly because of the agreement by the Steering Groups to focus on regional management.

MK also noted possible personnel changes in organisations affiliated to Project UK, and the importance of engaging with any new members of staff. MK informed the group that Heriot-Watt were looking to recruit two more PhD positions. One position will look at scallop population connectivity around Scotland and the North Sea – with links to previous research in the Channel and Irish Sea – and the other position will focus on quantifying bycatch, using cameras to overlook the conveyer belts and automate the counting process. Both positions are to be filled in between September to January. MK's final update was that Heriot-Watt was approached by Cisco to apply for funding to work on fishing instruments on inshore vessels, such as gear in, gear out technology. MK thought this could be transformative and is a joint project in collaboration with SafetyNet Technologies.

JP said it was fantastic news to hear and looked forward to updates. JP then concluded the meeting, thanked all for their time and stated that the draft minutes from this meeting would be available in two weeks.

Action	Responsibility
<p><i>Nephrops - Harvest strategy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JP to share a summary of proposed work with the focus group. • DW to continue to work with Seafish on planning for a Nephrops management event, with support from the Secretariat to consider how to fund documentation of current management measures in each functional unit, and how to fund the regional workshops. 	<p>JP DW</p>
<p><i>Nephrops - Landing Obligation compliance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat to review how the Landing Obligation is being addressed in EU MSC certified fisheries and share with the group. • Secretariat to speak with MMO, MS, Deara and AFBI about how they are enforcing the Landing Obligation, and request any (anonymised) information on incidents of non-compliance. 	<p>MSC MSC</p>
<p><i>Scallop – SICG management paper</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat to share the Terms of Reference for scallop management research with the Steering Group for comment. • Secretariat to contact MK to discuss management research. 	<p>MSC MSC & MK</p>
<p><i>Scallop - Fishery management plan review</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage 2 Steering Group to develop independent FMP from Channel scallops FIP, but to transfer the overlapping content so as not to duplicate effort. • CP to lead on scallop S2 FMP, with input and support from Steering Group members, including BL. 	<p>Steering Group CP</p>