

## Minutes: *Nephrops* Steering Group

Meeting Date: 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Location: Online

Attendees	Organisation
AH: Adam Holland	Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation (ANIFPO)
AmH: Amelia Harper	Lidl
AB: Andrew Brown	Macduff Shellfish
AC: Annika Clements	Ulster Wildlife Trust
BC: Ben Collier	Northern Ireland gear trials
CD: Calum Duncan	ScotLINK
CM: Carlos Mesquita	Marine Scotland Science
ClM: Claire Moore	Hilton Seafoods
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff Shellfish
DW: Dan Whittle	Whitby Seafoods (Chair)
DD: David Donnan	NatureScot
EW: Elaine Whyte	Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance (CIFA)
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon
GB: Giles Bartlett	Whitby Seafoods
JE: Jack Emmerson	Isle of Man Government
JP: Jo Pollett	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
LG: Laura Gale	Tesco
LH: Lief Hendrikz	World Wildlife Fund
LB: Lisa Bennett	Marine Stewardship Council (MSC)
LF: Lynne Forman	Associated Seafood Ltd
ML: Mat Lundy	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)
MT: Melissa Tillotson	Waitrose
MDN: Michele De Noia	NatureScot
MM: Mike Mitchell	Young's Seafood
MP: Mike Park	Scottish White Fish Producers Association Ltd (SWFPA)
NM: Neil Milsom	Isle of Man Government
NN: Nikolai Nawri	Cefas
SC: Sally Chamberlain	Seafish
SiC: Simon Cummings	Kilkeel Seafoods
SJ: Sophie Jenkinson	Morrisons
TF: Teresa Fernandez	Hilton Seafoods
TW: Tim Whitton	Bangor University
<b>Apologies</b>	
Dave Parker	Sainsbury's
Seamus Fitzsimmons	DAERA
Katie Keay	Co-op

### Purpose of the meeting

1. Recap of key actions for 2023 and score changes needed ahead of the annual review in March/April.
2. Update the Steering Group on discussions with Regional Management Groups on the harvest strategy, and agree next steps
3. Update on habitat impact research and discuss any further work required

### Performance Indicator (PI) Score changes expected for Year four:

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1.2.2 Harvest strategy (Behind target)      | 2.4.3 Habitat information         |
| 1.2.2 Harvest control rules (Behind target) | 2.5.1 Ecosystem outcome           |
| 1.2.3 Information and monitoring            | 2.5.2 Ecosystem management        |
| 2.1.1 Primary species outcome               | 3.2.1 Fishery specific objectives |
| 2.3.1 ETP outcome                           | 3.2.2 Decision making processes   |
| 2.3.3 ETP information                       | 3.2.3 Compliance and enforcement  |
| 2.4.2 Habitat management                    |                                   |

### Agenda Item 1: (PI 1.1.1) Stock status update

#### *Scottish Functional Units (CM)*

CM gave an overview of the *Nephrops* surveys carried out in Scottish functional units (FU) in 2022. There were no surveys in FU 8, 10 and 34 this year due to lack of time. The results show that all functional unit stocks in Scottish waters are currently above Btrigger, and functional units 6 and 13 are currently fished at a level that is above Fmsy. CM also shared the *Nephrops* discard rate results from the 2018 and 2019 ICES observer program. *Nephrops* sample data is derived from the fish species sampling bycatch reports, and is only available from the ICES Working Group reports. The observer program was not running in 2020-21 because there were restriction on vessel use due to the pandemic, and 2022 survey data will be processed in the 2023 ICES Working Group.

#### *Irish Sea Functional Units (ML)*

ML shared slides from ICES on the stock sampling survey in functional unit 14 from 2018 – 2022. No sampling was undertaken in 2020, and limited sampling in 2021 due to Covid restrictions. Fishing pressure remains below Fmsy, and the stock size, although showing a downward trend, remains within the expected fluctuations of MSYBtrigger.

For functional unit 15, the sampling levels have been consistently high over time and give a good representation of the stock status. The 2023 ICES advice is for a reduction in catch by 6%, however the fishing pressure is still below Fmsy and the biomass remains above MSYBtrigger, so ML does not have any concerns over the condition or productivity of functional unit 15.

#### *English Functional Units (NN)*

NN shared the Cefas survey of functional unit 6, which shows a decline in stock size. Burrow density increased between 2016-2020 but has since been in decline. If the current abundance trend continues to decline below Btrigger then further harvest control measures will be required. NN noted that since the introduction of the Landing Obligation in 2019, there has been less than 1 tonne of landings below

the Minimum Landing Size (MLS). The catch advice for 2023 has declined by 17% based on the decline in abundance seen in the underwater TV surveys.

#### *Discussion*

FN asked if there were concerns that functional unit 13 and functional unit 6 were fished above Fmsy. CM expressed some concern over the stock size in functional unit 6, as there has been a declining trend in biomass seen in the survey over the past five years. For functional unit 13, there is less concern as the stock is relatively high in terms of abundance.

AB asked about the survivability of undersize discards. For creel gear, the assumed survivability of discards is 100%, but for trawled *Nephrops* in functional unit 7, 8 and 9 it is 25%. In functional unit 16, it is 15%, and 0% in functional unit 34 and 10.

DW asked the about process if the biomass in functional unit 6 falls below Btrigger. NN explained that if this happens, ICES will reduce the MSY value by calculating the ratio between actual abundance and trigger value. This will lead to reduced catch advice through the TAC, rather than using technical measures to reduce effort.

#### ***Actions from agenda item 1:***

- Secretariat to contact Iain Glasgow (Defra) to determine the Defra process for introducing harvest control rules in functional unit 6, if the November 2023 ICES advice shows the stock biomass has reached Btrigger

#### **Agenda Item 2: (PI 1.2.1, PI 1.2.2) Harvest strategy and harvest control rules (JP)**

JP discussed the Regional Management Groups that were established in 2022 to consider technical measures appropriate to each functional unit. The second round of meetings for the Irish Sea and North Sea occurred in December 2022, and the West of Scotland meeting is scheduled for January 2023. Management scenarios from each region will be presented to Paul Medley, a Principle 1 expert, to model and a review of scores will be undertaken through the annual review process. The Secretariat, DW, FN and GB have had discussions with Defra and DAERA on submitting a request to ICES for target and limit reference points, and a similar meeting is scheduled with Marine Scotland at the end of January.

#### *Discussion*

CD mentioned the Marine Conservation Society Good Fish Guide ratings, and that the next round of ratings consultations will start in February. CD encouraged input into those consultations, to allow the ratings team to consider information shared during Project UK meetings, and other meetings that the ratings team have not attended.

#### ***Actions from agenda item 2:***

- CD to share consultation details from MCS Good Fish Guide team with Secretariat

### **Agenda Item 3: (PI 2.1.1 – PI 2.2.3) Primary and secondary species (LB)**

#### *Smart trawl*

LB updated on the 'smart trawl' gear trial being developed by Heriot-Watt University, which is designed to reduce bycatch in demersal trawl gear. The smart trawl has already been trialled on a Shetland demersal trawl vessel, and the next trial, which researchers hope will include *Nephrops* vessels, will run until summer 2024.

#### *In- scope species*

JP added that the updated version of the MSC Standard 3.0 has been published, and FN will be updating the action plan at the next annual review in April. A key change is that there is no differentiation between primary and secondary species, they will now all be referred to as 'in scope' species. Fisheries that enter into MSC assessment from April 2023 will need to enter using the new version of the Standard. JP discussed the In-Transition to MSC (ITM) programme, which allows FIPs until 2028 to transition to Version 3.0 of the MSC Standard.

#### *Alternative measures report*

LB updated on behalf of BL that he is still working on the review of alternatives measures reports and LB will check if he needs any more input into the ETP sections to finalise them.

#### **Actions from agenda item 3:**

- JP will circulate more information on the ITM programme, including entry requirements and costs, to understand Steering Group interest in participating.

### **Agenda Item 4: (PI 2.3.2 – 2.3.3) Endangered, Threatened and Protected Species (LB)**

#### *Clean Catch app*

The Clean Catch UK (CCUK) app is still being rebuilt following problems with the software that were identified last year. Seven 'groups' within CCUK need rebuilding. An app extension has also been proposed from August 2023. LB discussed an alternative ETP monitoring app, [MoFI](#), that the Joint Demersal Fishery (JDF) is developing, which should be ready in summer 2023. This app was developed to meet the same ETP requirements as the *Nephrops* fishery, and could potentially be adapted to suit other fisheries when it is completed.

#### *ETP lists for wheelhouse guides*

The ETP list is awaiting final comments from the environmental sub-group before the next stage of guide development. The highest priority species can then be spotlighted in a wheelhouse poster, with other species being developed into a secondary ID book.

#### *Discussion*

CP appreciated the effort LB has invested into the process and reiterated Macduff's willingness to trial the app when required. JP said that the trial areas for the MoFI are currently in the Baltic Sea, though the gear used (TR1 and TR2) would mean it could be applicable to the *Nephrops* vessels.

***Actions from agenda item 4:***

- LB will share clarification on CCUK updates for trawl and dredge groups with the minutes.
- LB will check with BL if any further input from the Steering Group is required for the ETP sections on the alternative measures reports.

**Agenda Item 5: (P1 2.4.1 – 2.4.3) Bangor habitat impact research (TW)**

TW previously gave an in-depth presentation of the findings of his benthic habitat impact research to Steering Group members. After receiving feedback from members, TW gave a brief presentation discussing the additional analysis he has since complete which includes analysis of ‘uncertain’ Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem (VME) records (previously only ‘certain’ VME records were included). The updated scores for TR1 and TR2 gear and was reported, accounting for most and least optimistic depletion scenarios. He said there was some point data available to classify VMEs however it was outside the scope of his research to undertake that work. TW has not included any Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) in Scotland in his analysis as the locations have not yet been agreed, but this could be a useful additional piece of work. Full conclusions and analysis can be found in the final report, which will be put on the Project UK website.

***Discussion***

CD requested clarification on the classification of VME from the datasets off the west coast of Scotland, and said that all ground could be considered as potential sea pen habitat and therefore as uncertain VME. TW clarified that VMEs were assigned according to how the original data was produced by OSPAR. Therefore TW couldn’t assign an area as a VME if the data wasn’t recorded that way in the first place by OSPAR. CD asked for other perspectives on the topic,

AC suggested asking OSPAR for the difference between the ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ categories of VME data, and said – using the precautionary principle – she would be uncomfortable excluding the ‘uncertain’ records from this analysis without more information.

JP suggested that TW’s final report should feed into other formal processes already underway, as that is where the decisions are being made regarding habitat management. This topic could be discussed further at the environmental sub-group. DD is involved with the formal process underway for the designation and management of Scottish MPAs, and the priority is gathering data specific to the suggested MPA sites so informed decisions can be made. He said trying to gather that level of data at a wider scale, as is being suggested here, would be a significant task.

EW reiterated it is important to obtain and share information with other marine planning, aquaculture and renewables projects, due to the amount of cross-over in work underway, particularly in the West of Scotland.

***Actions from agenda item 5:***

- TW to circulate a final report with feedback incorporated
- CD to speak with DD and consider contacting OSPAR to request further information on how VMEs are classified within their data layers, specifically how ‘certain’ and ‘uncertain’ records are classified

- Secretariat to add the discussion around habitat management to the next environmental sub-group meeting agenda

## Agenda Item 6: Fishery Management Plan

### *Report update (GB)*

LB and GB have been working on the FIP FMP and trying to reduce the information gaps. Data requests for a number of sections were sent to the MMO in December. GB has sent a sub-section to review to the Clyde Fishermen's Association, which can be completed after the West of Scotland RMG meeting later in January. GB will add outputs from the RMG to the annexes of the FMP. Specific information requests and clarifications still needed are:

Section 1: GB to share with WWF, NatureScot, Northern Ireland Wildlife Trust, Scotlink, Seafish Economics Teams.

Section 2: Information needed from Defra (IG)

Section 3: Dale Rodmell to review Producer Organisation management processes

Section 5: Marine Scotland (Liz Clark) input needed

Section 6: Information needed from ML, Ewan Bell (Cefas)

Section 7: Information requested through MMO data request

AH suggested contacting Irish representatives for the shared portion of the Irish Sea, which Mike Fitzpatrick could review. GB will contact Mike.

### *Scottish approach to FMPs*

JP updated on behalf of Will Griffiths (Marine Scotland). They are aligning with the Joint Fisheries Statement, and will develop an FMP for *Nephrops* between 2022-2024, though no further details are available on FMP leadership. AB added that Marine Scotland is going through a restructure including a review of responsibility allocation, with a focus on the most economically valuable stocks such as demersal and *Nephrops*. Information expected in January 2023, which AB will share.

### *Northern Irish approach to FMPs*

LB updated on behalf of Seamus Fitzsimmons. There will eventually be three FMPs for the Irish Sea – pelagic, demersal and Northern Ireland Inshore FMP. DAERA's plan is to publish the easier ones first – sole, plaice and possibly haddock, then move on to the more difficult *Nephrops*, cod and whiting. These individual FMPs will then contribute to the overall Irish Sea demersal FMP. Publication of this is not likely until the end of 2024.

### **Actions from agenda item 6:**

- Secretariat to follow up with Jim Watson on the Scottish approach to the *Nephrops* FMP.
- AB to share any information from the Marine Scotland meeting on the restructure of their fisheries management teams

**Agenda Item 7: MSC markets update (JP)**

JP shared a presentation on the MSC markets and chain of custody requirements for *Nephrops* in Europe and North American markets. The trends in MSC labelled product sales across different key markets since 2016 is increasing, and that is expected to continue to increase in the coming years. JP shared sourcing policies from major suppliers in the US and Europe which all support preferences for seafood to be third party certified or working towards certification in a FIP.

*Discussion*

AB noted some minor decline in 2021/22 in growth for some of the countries. JP explained that this was due to the removal of labelled mackerel products, which would have had a bigger impact on market growth if not for the rise in MSC certified tuna products and MSC tuna sourcing commitments from some retailers. AB would be interested in seeing the percentage share of exports that were MSC certified, which might show whether MSCs market share is increasing or decreasing.

GB reflected on the Northern Ireland retailer meeting and the powerful message that came from retailers sharing their sourcing policies.

**Actions from agenda item 7:**

- Secretariat to look at what percentage share of exports are MSC certified, to understand whether MSCs market share is increasing or decreasing.

**Agenda Item 8: FisheryProgress.org Social Policy (LB)**

LB shared a reminder of the FIPs remaining actions for the Fishery Progress social policy requirements. The grievance mechanism and vessel list are required by July. The Secretariat also intends to reapply for external funding through a partnership with Seafood Ethics Action (SEA) Alliance to help complete these actions.

*Discussion*

SC updated that social responsibility work is going on in the Northern Ireland fleet, funded by SEA Alliance, which will include the development of a grievance mechanism.

MP said SWFPA have an internal system in place regarding grievance mechanisms, but he is not aware of anything that covers the industry as a whole. MP referenced the comprehensive 'Fair Food' system which provides a third-party approach to grievance mechanisms. MT has a contact at the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) she can share, and also said Waitrose has been involved with SEA Alliance on some projects which she can share.

**Actions from agenda item 8:**

- Secretariat to confirm with Steering Group members that vessel list gathered so far are representative of their membership
- MT to share information with Secretariat regarding MCA contact and Waitrose' work with SEA alliance work

## Any Other Business

N/A

## Meeting Closes

Actions Arising	Responsibility
Secretariat to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- contact Iain Glasgow (Defra) to determine the Defra process for introducing harvest control rules in functional unit 6, if the November 2023 ICES advice shows the stock biomass has reached Btrigger</li> <li>- look at what percentage share of exports are MSC certified, to understand whether MSCs market share is increasing or decreasing.</li> <li>- confirm with Steering Group members that vessel list gathered so far are representative of their membership</li> <li>- follow up with Jim Watson on the Scottish approach to the <i>Nephrops</i> FMP.</li> <li>- add the discussion around habitat management to the next environmental sub-group meeting agenda</li> </ul>	Secretariat
CD to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- share consultation details from MCS Good Fish Guide team with Secretariat</li> <li>- Speak with DD and consider contacting OSPAR to request further information on the how VMEs are classified within their data layers, specifically how 'certain' and 'uncertain' records are classified</li> </ul>	Calum Duncan
JP will circulate more information on the ITM programme, including entry requirements and costs, to understand Steering Group interest in participating.	Jo Pollett
TW to circulate a final report with feedback incorporated	Tim Whitton
AB to share any information from the Marine Scotland meeting on the restructure of their fisheries management teams	Andrew Brown
MT to share information with Secretariat regarding MCA contact and Waitrose' work with SEA alliance work	Melissa Tillotson