

Minutes: *Nephrops* Steering Group meeting

Meeting Date: 12th October 2023

Location: Edinburgh Zoo, Edinburgh

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Item	Presenter
1. Summary: where we are	Lisa
2. Meeting with Marine Directorate - update	George
3. <i>Nephrops</i> FMP development - Scotland	Ella
4. Other FMP development	Seamus
5. JNCC: Presentation on Quality Status Report 2023	Liam
6. North Sea Cod ICES advice	Fiona
7. Safety Net presentation	Tom/ Linda
8. Northern Irish Fishermen's Federation updates	Adam
9. ETP prioritisation and Wheelhouse advisories	Fiona/ Rebecca
10. Marine Conservation Society Good Fish Guide ratings	Charlotte
End	

Attendees	Organisation
AH: Adam Holland	Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation (NIFF)
AB: Andrew Brown	Macduff Shellfish
BL: Bill Lart	Seafish
BEL: Ben Lambden	Tesco
CD: Calum Duncan	ScotLINK
CC: Charlotte Coombes	Marine Conservation Society
CP: Claire Pescod	Macduff Shellfish
DW: Daniel Whittle	Whitby Seafood
EB: Ella Brock	Seafish
EM: Eilidh Milligan	WWF
EW: Edward Whittle	Whitby Seafood
ELW: Elaine Whyte	Communities Inshore Fisheries Alliance (CIFA)
FA: Felix Ameye	Cefas
FN: Fiona Nimmo	Poseidon
GC: George Clark	Marine Stewardship Council
HW: Harry Wick	Northern Ireland Fish Producers' Organisation (NIFPO)
KC: Kenny Coull	Scottish White Fish Producers Association Ltd (SWFPA)
KW: Kirsty Woodcock	JNCC
LM: Liam Matear	JNCC
LW: Linda Wood	Marks & Spencer
LB: Lisa Bennett	Marine Stewardship Council
LF: Lynne Forman	Associated Seafood Ltd
MG: Mark Griffin	Southwest Regional Inshore Fisheries Group
MT: Melissa Tillotson	Waitrose

MDN: Michele De Noia	NatureScot
MP: Mike Park	Scottish White Fish Producers Association Ltd (SWFPA)
BC: Ben Collier	Northern Ireland Gear Trials
RL: Rebecca Lyal	Marine Stewardship Council
SC: Sally Chamberlain	Seafish Northern Ireland
SF: Seamus Fitzsimons	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
SC: Simon Cummings	Whitby / Kilkeel Seafood
TF: Teresa Fernandez	Hilton Seafoods
TR: Tom Rossiter	Safetynet Technologies

Agenda Item 1: Summary: Where We Are (LB)

[Click here to view the slides.](#) This high-level presentation provides a summary of the FIP scores and indicates the work that is required to increase remaining scores from SG<60 and continue to progress the FIP in its final year.

The modelling work that Paul Medley is looking into for the Irish Sea is ongoing, and FN continues to try and identify a new contact at AFBI since Mat Lundy left. Pia Schuchert is believed to be the right person now.

Actions from Item 1:

1. FN to follow up with Paul Medley and Pia Schuchert to coordinate data access for the *Nephrops* modelling work.

Agenda Item 2: Outcomes from meeting with the Marine Directorate (GC)

GC, DW, FN and AB met with the Marine Directorate to provide an update on the FIP, and to understand if there are any developments with the Scottish-led FMPs. The importance of the national FMPs to the future success of the FIP was also discussed.

- Marine Directorate have asked Seafish to lead on the development and delivery of the two *Nephrops* FMPs (North Sea & West Coast of Scotland).
- A Project UK representative is welcome to join Fisheries Management and Conservation Group (FMAC) FMP sub-group, as its remit is beyond Scotland.
- The harvest strategy flow-chart developed from the Regional Management Groups was shared with Marine Directorate

Actions from Item 2:

2. Secretariat to understand how or when it is appropriate for MSC/Project UK to consider joining the FMAC sub-group.

Agenda Item 3: *Nephrops* FMP development - Scotland (EB, Seafish)

Seafish's work will include evidence gathering, stakeholder engagement, development (drafting) and delivery of the FMP for the Marine Directorate. Stakeholder reflections can be shared with EB and Lewis Tattersall. There was Steering Group discussion on several points:

- Whether there'll be sufficient time to engage with FMAC & government to meet the delivery deadline in place.
- The likelihood of the Scottish FMP suggesting management by Functional Unit level (FU), and the technical implications of doing so.
- A co-management approach to development has provided a good framework in other FMP drafting scenarios. There was some support for FU management and a discussion of the implications of this, such as what the technical measures would be if FU quota is exceeded. There was agreement that biomass-based FU management is generally most effective.

Actions from Item 3:

3. Secretariat to establish contact with Seafish (contact ella.brock@seafish.co.uk and lewis.tattersall@seafish.co.uk) ahead of the Seafish stakeholder engagement process.

Agenda Item 4: Other FMP development (SF)

DAERA is leading on three FMPs in ICES area VIIa: Irish Sea Pelagic, Irish Sea Demersal, and Northern Ireland Inshore. The FMP working groups are collaborative with Defra, Welsh Government (except the inshore FMP), scientific bodies, Seafish and eNGOs providing input, with the Isle of Man likely to provide input to the Irish Sea Demersal and Pelagic FMPs.

The first Irish Sea Demersal Working Group (WG) meeting will be held shortly, with the Terms of Reference, timeline and structure already drafted. The Irish Sea Pelagics WG is built upon a good, preexisting industry group. WG's meet fortnightly, and the main issue currently being considered is bycatch (cod and whiting). Irish Sea cod and whiting are on average smaller [than other areas], though gear trials are supporting improvements. ICES advice is 0 catch for sole. In the Northern Ireland inshore FMP, a key issue is lack of Minister to sign off the budget, but they hope this will be resolved by summer 2024.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment was conducted for each FMP. The result will be published on DAERA's website.

Actions from Item 4: None**Agenda Item 5: JNCC – Quality Status Report 2023 (LM, KW)**

[Click for presentation](#) The decadal QSR includes results based on the modelling work using the risk-based indicator "BH3" that aims to assess the spatial extent and magnitude of potential seafloor physical disturbance caused by human activities; outputs have relevance to assessments of potentially adverse effects on benthic habitats under Descriptor 6 of the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The disturbance trends are relatively consistent across timeseries, likely because they examine disturbance at relatively large geographical ranges. The analysis process takes ~3 years and tries to incorporate the most recent data available.

The JNCC are looking to do some national assessments of fishing pressure in the UK and are interested in any trials the Steering Group are engaged with. It was suggested that this modelling work using BH3 could be run again in collaboration with Heriot-Watt university; JNCC noted that the work could be commissioned to avoid waiting 6 years for the next research call. They also work through Scottish marine network and UK National Resources Institute Marine.

- LM noted that the results of seabed health based on the OSPAR results are intended to be unbiased. How they are interpreted is a matter of what the priority of the data is. In terms of sensitivity, the report detects environmental change after disturbance has happened. They are currently working with OSPAR for clarification on what constitutes a 'baseline'.
- The Steering Group and JNCC discussed the limitation of resolution of fishing pressure data at c-square level, in some areas a single Swept Area Ratio value determines the outcome for the full c-square. The data is amassed slightly to protect commercially sensitive information, but JNCC can consider how to give access to more localised data. The Herriot-Watt and Relative Benthic Status tool could be used for cross-analysis with OSPAR to give confirm areas of fishing pressure. It would also be useful to note which Priority Marine Features (PMF) are included.

NB: In review of the minutes, CD requested that there was more focus on the discussion recognising that the fishery operates on a Priority Marine Feature. CD clarified that he did not suggest there should be no trawling on that habitat, but that there needed to be discussion surrounding the proportion of the habitat exposed to trawl disturbance.

Actions from Item 5:

4. FN to identify any actions that could be progressed if JNCC were able to undertake specific projects for the FIP.

Agenda Item 6: North Sea Cod Advice

North Sea advice is relevant to Action 6 on the action plan, which is around primary species in the trawl fishery. North Sea Cod scored 60-79 in the last review (and 60-69 for Irish Sea cod but <60 for West of Scotland cod) and so could be below the required standard should the fishery enter certification.

The Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB) WoS stock is below Blim, the SSB of the northwestern stock is acceptable, and SSB of the southern stock is just below Blim, though would still reach 60-79 based on the MSC requirements. PI 1.2.2 management is based on ICES advice: allocations shouldn't be area specific because of potential for mixing outside of those areas. MP expressed concern for the latest approach due to the loss of quota despite the northwestern stock being above SSB. Noted that the Clyde cod closure consultation has closed.

Actions from Item 6: none

Agenda Item 7: Safety Net presentation

With funding from M&S and Youngs, [SafetyNet technology](#) has been trialling bycatch reduction technology for over 2yrs on various grounds and net designs. A 'letterbox' escape design saw 40% decrease in unwanted catch, including a reduction in whiting and haddock bycatch, with some modifications including lights to attract or deter fish. Kit bundles start at £7k. Steering Group comments:

- While diamond meshed nets close-up when pulled and are less selective, and square meshed stay open, legislation on mesh shape needs to be considered when suggesting alterations. There was a suggestion that nets could have a selectivity rating, depending on their effectiveness.
- Change can be affected when there is an economic incentive to do so [or to recover lost quota] or is required by law. MP noted that prior to the landing obligation, discards were known from using landings data. A financial mechanism is needed to incentivise i.e. an agreement to mount cameras in exchange for increased quota or an allowance back. The government have written a new catch policy that may contain elements to improve selectivity, though compliance remains an issue.

Actions from Item 7:

5. Secretariat to discuss with FN and SafetyNet Technology about possible next steps for this work, including potential funding or support.

Agenda Item 8: Northern Irish Fishermen's Federation updates

- Since 2000s in the Irish Sea there has been a decline in size in whiting. Pressures include fishing pressure, an ecosystem/ environmental shift, increased sea temperatures and possibly a genetic bottleneck. Research is being undertaken to review the reduction in whiting biomass.
- There are several research projects and trials underway:
 - Seafish and AFBI: an industry fishing guide to increase evidence base (delayed due to funding).
 - Ulster University, AFBI, Alaska and New Zealand Tech: Techniques to reduce emissions through lighter gear and adoption of biogas in Northern Ireland (NI). Trials include: (1) measuring blue carbon sediment stores and (2) applying contact sensors to the footrope to measure spread of bottom contact. Trial delays due to boat issues, results expected July 2025.
 - Welfare and social: Specifically, a grievance policy that can be used in NI and beyond. 15 NI vessels have been involved in a trial that could be adopted in 2024. Work has been commissioned by the Seafood Action Ethics Alliance on crew welfare.

Actions from Item 8: None

Agenda Item 9: ETP prioritisation and Wheelhouse advisories

The ETP species have been identified by the Steering Group and prioritised by FN. Some Elasmobranchs have more specific information about the landing and handling requirements than others, including the non-elasmobranch species. Therefore, the elasmobranch species will have fishing advisory information, and the non-elasmobranchs will have key identification features. The mock-ups are based on templates from the Shark Trust.

Actions from Item 9:

6. Steering Group to review the ETP card format and feedback suggestions: [Link to card examples](#). Secretariat will follow up this request with an email.
7. Steering Group to input on whether Spurdog should still be included in the lists, and whether some ray species should be included if they are not strictly ETP (information will be included in above email)

Agenda Item 10: Marine Conservation Society Good Fish Guide ratings (CC)

Good Fish Guide: *Nephrops* presentation

The *Nephrops* scores will be reviewed again in winter 2023, after the ICES stock assessment. Currently, the stock status is generally good, though management needs to be responsive to stock status. For creels, the risk of minke whale entanglement requires a precautionary rating.

CC responded to a few queries:

- Observer data is likely not included for consideration as the quality and review of data needs to be taken into account. Typically, only the most scientifically robust or peer reviewed data is considered.
- A reduction in fishing vessels (effort) in Ireland and West of Scotland is not likely to impact management scoring as reducing boats is not a management measure.
- Habitat impacts are based on publicly available data that is fairly standardised. Habitat maps are applied over areas of known trawling. Citizen science could be included, though it would need to be the best available and peer reviewed. CD suggested using PMF data from the quality assured [GeMS](#) database.

Actions from Item 10: None

Any Other Business

- CD raised that MCS/WWF and ScotLINK provided feedback on last years annual review scores which were provided to the Secretariat. LB confirmed this feedback was formally received and considered as part of the annual review meeting last May.
- CD raised for transparency that MCS had raised questions to the Secretariat by email regarding the harmonisation of this FIP to the SFSAG certified fishery, which LB confirmed receipt of, and that these questions were still being considered.

What are the next steps for the FIP?

- LB said the usual annual review of scores are next April/May, and there will be another Steering Group meeting early next year, though this should be after the first FMP draft to guide the FIP on the future direction of management.
- MP asked about the opportunities for extension, and that legislation has been in flux since Brexit, and it has been difficult to achieve those impacted actions.

- The decision to extend in one way or another is for the key members of the Steering Group to make. The MSC is not able to take the same facilitation role after April 2024, regardless of additional funds. Continuing to use Fishery Progress would include social policy requirements.
 - After April 2024, the future direction will sit with whoever decides to continue the work of the FIP (if so) and should be driven by key members of the group. This approach is how ITM operates (an ITM Project Lead), and certified fisheries.
 - Depending on route taken, MSC will still be invested and able to support, but not drive the next stage of the FIP.
- If funding is available, can the FIP be extended?
 - CP said there are two options for extension: FP or ITM. CP is in favour of extension as there is more work to be done.
 - GC said it's important to consider what the funding is for. MSC will not be facilitating post-April, so it would be up to the lead or project leads to determine how the FIP will continue.

Actions from AOB

1. Secretariat to review the timing for the FMP development through Seafish and look to book another meeting following that date.

Meeting Closes

Actions Arising	Responsibility
Actions from Item 1: 1. FN to follow up with Paul Medley and Pia Schuchert to coordinate data access for the <i>Nephrops</i> modelling work.	Fiona
Actions from Item 2: 2. Secretariat to understand how or when it is appropriate for MSC/Project UK to consider joining the FMAC sub-group	Secretariat
Actions from Item 3: 3. Secretariat to establish contact with Seafish (contact ella.brock@seafish.co.uk and lewis.tattersall@seafish.co.uk) ahead of the Seafish stakeholder engagement process.	Secretariat
Actions from Item 5: 4. FN to identify any actions that could be progressed if JNCC were able to undertake specific projects for the FIP.	Fiona
Actions from Item 7: 5. Secretariat to discuss with FN and SafetyNet Technology about possible next steps for this work, including potential funding or support.	Secretariat

Actions from Item 9: 6. Steering Group to review the ETP card format and feedback suggestions: Link to card examples . Secretariat will follow up this request with an email. 7. Steering Group to input on whether Spurdog should still be included in the lists, and whether some ray species should be included if they are not strictly ETP (information will be included in above email)	Steering Group Steering Group
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