

## Minutes: Round 2 *Nephrops*, Principle 2

Meeting Date: 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Location: Teams

| Attendees                | Organisation  |
|--------------------------|---|
| AB: Abigayil Blandon     | WWF-UK  |
| AC: Annika Clements      | Ulster Wildlife Trust                                     |
| BC: Ben Collier          | Northern Ireland Gear Trials                              |
| BH: Barry Harland        | Whitby Seafoods   |
| BL: Bill Lart            | Seafish   |
| CD: Calum Duncan         | Scottish Environment LINK                                 |
| CM: Cameron Moffat       | Young's Seafood   |
| CP: Claire Pescod        | Macduff Shellfish   |
| DD: David Donnan         | NatureScot  |
| DW: Dan Whittle          | Whitby Seafoods   |
| EB: Ewen Bell            | Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science |
| ED: Ellie Dixon          | Co-Op   |
| EW: Elaine Whyte         | Community Inshore Fisheries Alliance                      |
| FN: Fiona Nimmo          | Poseidon  |
| GB: Giles Bartlett       | Whitby Seafoods   |
| GC: George Clark         | Marine Stewardship Council                                |
| HW: Harry Wick           | Northern Ireland Fish Producers Organisation              |
| JP: Jo Pollett           | Marine Stewardship Council                                |
| KK: Katie Keay           | Marine Stewardship Council                                |
| MP: Mike Park            | Scottish White Fish Producers Association                 |
| MS: Matt Spencer         | Marine Stewardship Council                                |
| RG: Roy Griffin          | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs  |
| SD: Steph Davidson       | Associated Seafoods                                       |
| SM: Simon Macdonald      | West Coast Regional Inshore Fisheries Group               |
| SSM: Sally Stewart-Moore | Seafish   |
| <b>Presenting</b>        |   |
| EM: Eleanor Michie       | Seafish   |
| LC: Liz Clarke           | Marine Scotland Science                                   |

### Purpose of the meeting

This call was an opportunity for the Steering Group to review progress made against each of the actions under Principle 2 in the Round 2 *Nephrops* Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) action plan, and get an update on the Kingfisher Marine Protected Area (MPA) mapping for fishermen project.

### Agenda Item 1: Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group's MSC recertification

The Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group (SFSAG) northern demersal fishery is undergoing reassessment of its Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification with vessels and gear types that overlap with the *Nephrops* FIP. *Nephrops* trawl gear (TR2) vessels that were previously

certified as part of the Unit of Assessment (UoA) for the demersal stocks, and the actions in the FIP action plan related to TR2 gear, should align with the certified fishery. MP said the northern demersal fishery had been certified for a number of years, but this reassessment may require more Principle 2 information for some functional units such as the Fladden.

FN said the Announcement Comment Draft Report (ACDR) for the SFSAG fishery considered different Endangered, Threatened and Protected (ETP) and Vulnerable Marine Ecosystem (VME) species in different components of Principle 2 than the FIP pre assessment and action plan does. For example, the ACDR for the SFSAG fishery lists two bird species, whereas the FIP includes all bird species under the Bird's Directive. FN said harmonising between the FIP and the SFSAG will help define relevant VMEs, and identify relevant Priority Marine Features (PMFs).

FN offered to speak with the Principle 2 assessor for the SFSAG recertification to discuss harmonisation further, and invited JP and MP to join if a meeting is arranged.

### **Action from Item 1:**

1. FN to contact the SFSAG recertification Principle 2 assessor to harmonise relevant Principle 2 differences between the FIP and the SFSAG fishery.

### **Agenda Item 2: primary species**

BL has been coordinating the Year two action to draft a review of alternative measures, which could reduce unwanted and/or undersized catch in the *Nephrops* fishery.

#### *Alternative measures report*

BL circulated a draft report and Excel table with an extensive list of previous trials to reduce bycatch, including data from the EU discardless database, Gear Innovation and Technology Advisory Group (GITAG) and Seafish's gear database. Most of the studies incorporated into BL's report had focussed on whitefish experimental gear measures, although other measures, such as proposed temporal closures, were also included. The majority of the studies BL had reviewed were conducted on commercial vessels and so were applicable to the gear used by FIP members. BL requested that the Steering Group reviews this report and provides feedback and details of any additional alternative measures to be included.

#### *Discussion*

CD suggested that this report should include Priority Marine Features (PMFs) and should acknowledge where or why a species was or was not considered. FN recommended that BL reviews materials from the ICES elasmobranch and cetacean Working Groups to support the ETP section of the report.

DW said the next step is to understand the process and cost for fishermen to adopt any new measures. For Northern Ireland, RG said gear specification was written into legislation and any amendments would need legislative change, which takes some months. RG believed there were discussions on including gear use in the licence conditions, which would make updates to gears more responsive. In terms of funding the introduction of new gear selectivity measures, RG said there was the opportunity for government support if it was a move to a brand-new gear, but this could only be done once, so it would be important to make sure the new gear is effective and what the industry

wants. The group agreed to review the content of the report annually in case any additional research needs to be included, or some of the measures become more viable for implementation.

BC said BL's report was extremely useful and could be disseminated to fishermen to aid their approaches to fishing. However, BC cautioned that each fisherman has their own preference for how the gear is fitted, and it would be interesting to observe how the specific variation to a gear might vary in terms of catch across a fishery.

#### *FN Annual Review update:*

Ahead of the annual review, FN provided an update on primary species status, with a focus on cod and whiting. The FIP Benchmarking and Tracking (BMT) tool shows an expected score change from SG<60 (a fail) to SG60-79 for the primary species management performance indicator (PI 2.1.2) in the West of Scotland.

### **Whiting**

#### *West of Scotland*

- Fishing pressure was reduced in 2020 and there were signs of stock recovery.
- The stock has moved from an ICES Category 1 assessment species to Category 5.
  - o As a Category 5 species there are no longer any reference points for the fishery. This means understanding the stock in relation to  $MSYB_{trigger}$  or  $B_{lim}$  cannot be determined, but it is assumed to have a low stock size.
- FN believed the stock was below the Point of Recruitment Impairment (PRI) and management measures are not expected to halt the decline of Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB).
- It was not considered in the SFSAG fishery ACDR, reiterating the need to harmonise between the FIP and the SFSAG fishery.
- Currently scoring SG<60 for PI 2.1.1

#### *Irish Sea*

- The latest assessment in June 2019 indicated a low Spawning Stock Biomass (SSB), well below  $B_{lim}$ . Fishing pressure has declined since 2015 but remains above  $F_{lim}$ .
- ICES advice for 0 TAC for 2020 and 2021.
- Resulting in a score of SG<60 for PI 2.1.1.

#### *North Sea*

- SSB was slightly above  $MSYB_{trigger}$  and well above  $B_{lim}$ , with mortality (F) above  $F_{MSY}$  and well below  $F_{lim}$ .
- Stocks score SG80 for PI 2.1.1.

### **Cod**

#### *West of Scotland*

- The June 2020 advice provided details on the benchmarking exercise which resulted in revised estimates for SSB, recruitment and mortality.
- Minor impact on status of stock, with F above  $F_{lim}$  and SSB declining further.
- Stock scores SG<60 for PI 2.1.1.

- ICES 2020 advice sheets suggest management was having no effect on biomass.

#### *Irish Sea*

- SSB had dropped in ICES 2020 advice.
- Previous reference points for the stock are no longer appropriate so this stock is now likely to be assessed using the MSC Risk-Based Framework (RBF) rather than the standard assessment tree.
- ICES advice is 93t in 2021 – exclusively for bycatch.
- ICES qualitative assessment considered the SSB as declining.
- Score change from SG60-79 to SG<60.

#### *North Sea*

- Stock below  $B_{lim}$  and above  $F_{lim}$ .
- Appropriate management measures in place with the SFSAG precautionary management plan recognised by ICES.
  - o Includes voluntary closures for juvenile cod.
- Reduced TAC expected to increase SSB.
- Score remained SG60-79.

#### *Discussion*

BL said that cod stocks in the West of Scotland were difficult to manage spatially as they do not exhibit aggregations in the same way as they do in the North Sea. MP added that due to the relatively constant low levels of bycatch of cod across the West of Scotland, move on rules were not effective. Vessels were continuously required to move into different areas in the West of Scotland, which creates a 'ping pong' effect, with no net benefit in terms of reducing catches of cod.

MP flagged to the Steering Group that the benchmarking of North Sea cod in 2020 recommended a downward revision of reference points for cod. FN said she would add this information to the FIP action plan.

DW asked why the assessment for Irish Sea cod was no longer appropriate, and why reference points had disappeared. EB explained that previous assessment model for Irish Sea cod was proven to be inappropriate through a benchmarking exercise, as it was not adequately recognising stock signals in commercial catch and surveys. This has resulted in the removal of reference points for the stock. Cod in the Irish Sea will remain a Category 3 species (assessed based on trends) but ICES is aware of the need for reference points for the stock and is trying to develop an appropriate model.

#### *Functional Unit bycatch research*

LC presented a preliminary analysis of bycatch data from the Clyde between 2011 – 2019. Usually there are 10 survey trips per year in the Clyde, with five dedicated *Nephrops* stock assessment and five for discard data. The summarised main species of unwanted catch in her research were: lesser-spotted dogfish, cod, haddock, hake, whiting and plaice.

The results indicated that over the study period the average unwanted catch per trip averaged: 15-20kg for cod, 50kg for haddock and all other species of focus were 6kg-8kg. Lesser spotted dogfish were consistently in the catch data, occurring every year. LC warned that the small sample size can

lead to distorted data when unusual activity is recorded, such as when rare species were encountered.

DW asked whether these catch composition estimates at a vessel level could be scaled up to be representative of the fleet. LC believed it could be, but it would take time to clean the dataset to scale it to a fleet level. The Secretariat will contact LC after the meeting to discuss the request to scale the data. The data presented did not have include details of whether the unwanted catch was retained or returned to the water.

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

1. Secretariat to:
  - a. circulate BL's alternative measures report to the Steering Group for comment.
  - b. contact LC for more information on scaling up her bycatch data to a fleet level and the timeline for completing this.
2. BL to:
  - a. draft ETP section of alternative measures report, which includes PMFs.
  - b. Share alternative measure report with Secretariat.
  - c. tidy up the report and add reference.
  - d. add the seasonal closure of cod grounds to the report.
3. Steering Group members to provide BL information on how vessels are using the different gear modifications in practice.
4. FN to incorporate latest North Sea cod benchmarking recommendations into the FIP's action plan.

### **Agenda Item 3: secondary species**

Prior to this meeting, FN conducted a Productivity, Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) on all secondary species identified in each functional unit in the FIP. A PSA analysis is a semi-quantitative approach to determine the productivity of a species and the level of fishing impact that species can sustain before severe impairment. The PSA needs extensive information on both the characteristics of the species (for productivity scores) such as average age and fecundity; and the fishery and fishing methods used to catch the bait species (susceptibility scores).

FN determined productivity attributes through FishBase and MarLin and used personal knowledge of stocks and fishing practices to determine susceptibility scores. Overall, there were no secondary species identified as at risk (scoring  $SG < 60$ ) but three species scored  $SG 60-79$ , which were monkfish, thornback ray and whiting. Cefas had recently published catch composition in the North Sea *Nephrops* fishery that FN said she would include into her PSA report.

The Steering Group discussed the importance of other bycatch projects that could contribute to this action, such as the Tesco/Hilton Seafood bycatch project and the Youngs/Associated Seafoods and SafetyNet Technology project in Scotland. BC informed the group that industry in Northern Ireland were looking to replicate the Scottish BATmap project, in which fishermen used an app to report catch composition to help apply move-on rules. GB mentioned a 'Smartrawl' project being led by Paul Fernandes, which focussed on post-capture selectivity and offered to update the Steering Group on any progress.

***Actions from Item 3:***

1. FN to update the PSA based on recent Cefas catch composition report.
2. BC to provide updates on the Northern Ireland catch app.
3. GB to provide an update of Paul Fernandes Smartrawl project at the next Steering Group meeting.

**Agenda Item 4: endangered, threatened and protected species**

The FIP action plan requires the development of a recording protocol to record, analyse and monitor endangered, protected and threatened (ETP) species interactions and outcomes (e.g. returned alive). FN presented a draft ETP interaction log she had produced to the Steering Group.

The interaction log is based on working examples that the Danish Fish Producers Organisation (DFPO) and the Scottish Fish Sustainability Accreditation Group (SFSAG) already use in their MSC certified fisheries. The interaction log by FN includes invertebrates, mammals, benthic species, habitat features and birds, as well as Scottish Priority Marine Features (PMFs). Importantly, the location and outcome of the interaction can also be recorded in FN's interaction log. The draft interaction log will be circulated to the Steering Group for their feedback, and then needs to be tested by skippers to understand how it works in practice. A wheelhouse identification guide will be needed to support skippers and crew in identifying ETP species, which can be based on the current SFSAG guide.

SSM informed the group that there is an app used in Wales to report invasive species, which could be used to monitor bycatch and ETP interactions. DD and AC highlighted the importance of industry leading on the reporting protocol. DD suggested the Steering Group could consider ways to ensure fishermen were handling ETP species correctly, with a focus on flapper skate.

MP believed fishermen would be interested in supporting this action but cautioned that the uncertainty around quota and pressure from Brexit means it is not a good time to ask for additional support. MP also suggested that skippers would prefer an electronic version of the interaction log rather than paper. EW agreed with MP's points and asked for any information she can share with her members to gauge their level of interest.

FN suggested that the Steering Group continues developing the interaction log, while considering how to fund and develop an app.

AC, SSM and DD volunteered to support the development of a wheelhouse ETP guide, sourcing good quality imagery for each species and ID tips, and MP said he would reach out to Jess Sparks of Seafish, who developed the SFSAG guide.

***Actions from Item 4:***

1. EW to ask her members if they would be interested in trialling the ETP interaction log.
2. MP to contact Jess Sparks to see if Seafish can support extending the wheelhouse guide.
3. Secretariat to circulate the ETP interaction log to the Steering Group for feedback.
4. FN, AC, SSM and DD to develop wheelhouse ETP ID guide.

**Agenda Item 5: habitats**

This action requires understanding the scale and impact of the fishery on any overlapping habitats, including understanding the management measures in place to control fishing activity. EM is

developing an interactive tool to map marine protected area (MPA) management measures and fishing restrictions for fishermen.

### *MPA mapping for fishermen project*

#### *Background*

- Understanding fishing restrictions in the UK is complex, due to overlapping areas of restrictions and designated MPAs awaiting confirmation of management measures.
- There is no single consolidated spatial data set for all UK fishing restrictions.
- Project is funded by EMFF and MMO and aims to complete phase 1 by October 2021. Once phase 1 is complete, any new protected areas should be easy to input to the dataset.

#### *Overlap with Project UK*

- The project could contribute to the delivery of Action 9d of the FIP Action Plan: 'to review status of management measures development and implementation within UK MPA network'.
- The interactive map can filter by ICES area or by *Nephrops* Functional Unit and contains the full UK MPA network (with associated management measures)
- Kingfisher are working with Whitby Seafoods to develop an interactive web map to support this FIP.
- Outputs from the map could include imagery for the fishery management plan (FMP).
- EM provided the current coverage of management measures relevant to this FIP:
  - o Across the UoA, 10.8% of the fishery's footprint has demersal trawl restrictions.
  - o 1.7% has creel restrictions.
  - o MPAs cover 30.7% of the UoA (although not all have designated management measures yet).

#### **Discussion**

MP said this project would be useful for international partners, as he had recently spoken with Danish colleagues who were unclear of where regulations apply. EM said it might be possible to include a data layer for habitats to calculate fishing overlap by habitat type, as long as there is the data to map it. AC said the JNCC Combined Habitat Map or EMODnet Habitats layer would be useful for including habitats information.

EM explained that the map would be updated based on latest information, and could include PMFs once the data is available. The tool will also incorporate vessel information so that a skipper can input their details, what they plan to fish and where to create a tailored map for their needs. CD cautioned that some restrictions are not based on gear but vessel attributes, such as engine size, and suggested this would need to be captured in the map.

#### *Marine Protected Area Management and Monitoring project update*

Marine Protected Area Management and Monitoring (MarPAMM) is developing tools for monitoring and managing protected coastal marine environments in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Western Scotland, scheduled for completion by September 2022.

The aim of the project is to improve the data to support MPA management plans and to implement effective management measures. Project members include DAERA, AFBI, NatureScot and Marine

Scotland. In Northern Ireland there are three management plans being drafted: one for the North and North East coast, one for County Down to County Lough and site-specific plans for Carlingford Loch and Dundrum Bay. There are respective groups for both site-specific areas (Carlingford and Dundrum) as well as a stakeholder group for wider the Irish Sea regions, which is for the regional management plans, with all groups having good fishing sector involvement.

Covid delayed some of the recent MarPAMM meetings, but AC said there was still the opportunity for more industry involvement with the management groups and recommended getting an update from the Scottish representatives involved with MarPAMM.

### **Inshore VMS update**

Written updates on iVMS were provided by the Devolved Administrations. DAERA is currently reviewing iVMS options and a stakeholder consultation is due in a few months. If DAERA progress with iVMS it will be through a licence condition rather than legislation.

Marine Scotland's inshore fleet modernisation program will equip Scottish commercial vessels with appropriate and proportionate vessel monitoring systems. Legislation is due to be implemented in 2021 to make monitoring systems mandatory.

The habitats Masters project submitted in 2020 highlighted significant gaps to be addressed. The Secretariat contacted Jan Hiddink at Bangor University about delivering the required analysis of the impacts of the fishery on commonly encountered habitats and vulnerable marine ecosystems (VMEs), and a quote and work plan have been drafted. So far funding applications to be able to start the project have been unsuccessful, so a request was made for Steering Group members to provide suggestions for potential funding sources.

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

1. Steering Group to contact Secretariat if they have funding suggestions for habitat research.

### **Agenda Item 6: Action 10 – ecosystem**

To understand more about the interaction between the fishery and the wider ecosystem a scale, intensity, consequence analysis (SICA) workshop was organised in March 2021. A wide range of experts were invited to the workshop to discuss their views on the fishery and provide evidence for their understanding of the ecosystem impacts and contributed to a successful workshop. FN will write up the results and circulate them to the Steering Group and has updated the annual review on this basis.

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

1. FN to write up SICA report and circulate it with the Steering Group.

### **AOB**

None was flagged.

### **Meeting Closes**

17.00hr



| Actions Arising   | Responsibility   |
|---|--|
| <u>Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group's MSC recertification</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FN to contact the SFSAG recertification Principle 2 assessor to harmonise relevant Principle 2 differences between the FIP and the SFSAG fishery</li> </ul>  | FN   |
| <u>Primary species</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secretariat to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>circulate BL's alternative measures report to the Steering Group for comment.</li> <li>contact LC for more information on scaling up her bycatch data to a fleet level and the timeline for completing this.</li> </ol> </li> <li>BL to:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>draft ETP section of alternative measures report, which includes PMFs.</li> <li>Share alternative measure report with Secretariat.</li> <li>tidy up the report and add reference.</li> <li>add the seasonal closure of cod grounds to the report.</li> </ol> </li> <li>Steering Group members to provide BL information on how vessels are using the different gear modifications in practice.</li> <li>FN to incorporate latest North Sea cod benchmarking recommendations into the FIP's action plan.</li> </ul> | Secretariat<br><br>BL<br><br>Steering Group<br><br>FN  |
| <u>Secondary species</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FN to update the PSA based on recent Cefas catch composition report.</li> <li>BC to provide updates on the Northern Ireland catch app.</li> <li>GB to provide an update of Paul Fernandes Smartrawl project at the next Steering Group meeting.</li> </ul>  | FN<br>BC<br>GB   |
| <u>Endangered, threatened and protected species</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EW to ask her members if they would be interested in trialling the ETP interaction log.</li> <li>MP to contact Jess Sparks to see if Seafish can support extending the wheelhouse guide.</li> <li>Secretariat to circulate the ETP interaction log to the Steering Group for feedback.</li> <li>FN, AC, SSM and DD to develop wheelhouse ETP ID guide.</li> </ul>  | EW<br><br>MP<br><br>Secretariat<br><br>FN, AC, SSM, DD |
| <u>Habitats</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering Group to contact Secretariat if they have funding suggestions for habitat research.</li> </ul>  | Steering Group   |
| <u>Ecosystem</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FN to write up SICA report and circulate it with the Steering Group.</li> </ul>   | FN   |