**Project UK Fisheries Improvements Stage One: Crab and Lobster**

**(Facilitated by the MSC)**

**Sub-group committee dial in**

Thursday 19th September 2019 10.00 – 11.00

MSC, 1 Snow House, London, EC1A 2DH

Sarah Clark Devon & Severn IFCA SC

Tim Huntington Poseidon TH

Beshlie Pool South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen BP

Theresa Redding Natural England TR

Christie Ingle Marine Pioneer CI

Jenny Murray Defra JM

Chloe Smith Southern IFCA CS

Jo Pollett MSC JP

Katie Keay MSC KK

Matt Spencer MSC MS

TR is chairing this meeting and opens the proceedings by welcoming the attendees. Today the group will be reviewing the harvest control rules currently in place in each IFCA, and considering the information entered into the Fishery Management Plan. TR states that the HCRs are not standard across the board and that there may be issues with the male population not reaching MSY. TR asks the IFCAs if they believe there are enough HCRs in place to keep the stock at a sustainable level if demand and/or price increases for crab. TR follows this up by asking if they think there are HCRs that need tightening up and what measures or ways to reduce effort could be implemented in a fairly short amount of time.

SC responds to the questions, and states that she will complete her sections of work on the FMP by next week. In regards to the HCRs, SC believes it is a tricky area of work as there are discussions of crab catch declining in some areas. SC believes they are down this year, but it is difficult to ascertain whether it is down to effort on the stock or other factors. This makes it hard to know when the opportune time is to act if the measures were able to be introduced. SC states IFCAs have the capability to introduce extra measures if the necessary data is strong enough to back it. SC states the catches are double what they were 10 years ago but the big issue is with the stock outside the 6 (6 mile limit) across the whole of the channel which may be impacting on the stock in the SW.

**Action: MS to follow up with SC on FMP work.**

TR acknowledges this and states that assessments of the stock are only done every two years and raises concerns as to whether there is sufficient monitoring being done for the stocks in question in between assessments. TR enquires as to whether this data is gathered by landing or by catch. SC explains that in the Dev & Sev IFCA they don’t record the catch data as they don’t have the resources, however the group believes that Cornwall does have a lot of info available- not even Cefas would collect the at sea data, only landings.

TR asks whether 2019 is when the next assessment is due and whether this could form a part of the management plan? It is dependent on who is gathering the data so TH explains that evidence for P1.2.3 is not prescriptive. For a pass, the FIP will need a sufficient amount of data on the stock to support the strategy. TH goes on the state that if the group has a broad idea of what the effort and composition of the fleet is then this should be acceptable; however, this will have to be collective, across all the IFCAs and importantly also outside of the 6 nm limit.

TR brings the conversation back to assessments and monitoring and the risks this poses, giving the example of what this might mean for pot restrictions. SC reassures the group that despite assessments only being down every two years, the data is gathered continuously, but states that this is worth check with Cefas. TH believes that if this is the case then this should be fine and would allow a triggering of a HCR rule to allow the stock to recover, depending on the limits that have been set e.g. using Blim or a proxy for Blim to set the HCR trigger above this to give a buffer that builds in the time needed for a response. Once the group has agreed what the HCR structure is across the board, how the stock is monitored, and what the responses are, then it should be sufficiently responsive to maintain the stocks at sustainable levels.

**Action: MSC to check with Cefas into data collection, and have them review the HCR table for thoughts on what might make a difference to stock levels**

TR states that this goes right to the heart of their question – as to whether the IFCAs think there needs some tweaking or if they have identified weaknesses across the board. IFCA members state that this is a question that is broader than the IFCAs alone, they believe that within the 6nm there is good regulation and systems in place but outside of the 6nm it gets tricky. TH informs the group what can be adjusted to get a response from the stock and lets the group know that it looks like only Dev & Sev and Cornwall IFCA have mechanisms in place. Members of the group from IFCAs raise concerns about activity outside the 6nm and would like to know what the MMO can do outside of the 6nm, as there are bigger vessels there and this is within the MMO remit. Many admit that this is a discussion that needs to be had between MMO and Defra.

**Action: MSC to follow up with JM/HG (Defra and MMO) on this point.**

The discussion moves on to limitations, particularly of potting. SC informs that Dev & Sev IFCA have spatial restrictions for potting, and CS states that Southern IFCA is looking into getting that data but resource capacity is making this a difficult process. SC states that she could look into info from her area and compare it to the work Adam did. TH suggests that if the info is there - or could be gathered - then it should be pooled together, to which the group agrees, but state that we will also need to know the pressure outside of the 6nm.

**Action: SC to compare work against Adam’s**

**Action: MSC to obtain data from MMO**

**Action: MSC to contact Cornwall IFCA and IoS IFCA to get details on rec fishing limits**

TR moves on from this topic into areas that need to be addressed in more depth in the FMP. Begins by asking whether bycatch in demersal trawls is increasing as this is an area that will need addressing and that the group needs more data on recreational fisheries. IoS has an extra 500 pots in the rec sector. SC lets the group know that in Dev & Sev there are 337 permits with each permit only allowing 5 tags (5 pots), but there is no limit to how many permits can be issued. CS and TR add that Southern and IoS are looking at bringing in something very similar. TR continues, stating that with the rec sector it is not just how many pots there are, but we will also need to get an idea of the catch they are taking across the board. TH says this harks back to HCRs and an adaptive management process. For the fishery to be certified it will need a coordinated approach to managing the fishery if the fishery beings to show signs of stress. TH does not believe we can do this alone, he believes we will need Defra and the MMO to understand this and incorporate into their systems with the support of IFCAs.

**Action: MSC to follow up on TH statement with Defra and MMO to identify how receptive they are to the idea.**

The group discusses the feasibility of harmonising their regulations and all agree on the importance of getting buy in from outside the 6nm. CS believes that this is possible but it will requiring steering from the MMO as she believes the MMO has the authority to change the licence conditions, something that SC agrees with. SC also raises concerns into what is going on elsewhere in the channel, illustrates to the group that there is a missing area in the assessment from the Isle of Wright to the Thames estuary. SC states that there has been discussions that there might be a disease affecting the juvenile crabs this year which could affects recruitment going forward. TR states that this is something that the group needs to take up with Cefas to look into measure to help support the stock if this is true.

TH moves the conversation into the topic of who is likely to be the client group going forward – if it does go through assessment. TR asks whether it will be the MMO/ Defra who will coordinate the management? TH gives the example of Greenland where all MSC certificates and annual reporting are done by one group. Could it be supported the supermarkets, as they are the drivers for the FIP. The group reiterate that it hasn’t been the fishermen pushing this FIP forward, it has been the end of the supply chain. SC states that this is something we need to give some real thought to, but in terms of who pays then she believes it could be supermarkets or seafood companies. Some members feel that without industry pushing the FIP it poses as a threat to the success and subsequent certification.

SC states that SW has probably the strictest restrictions in the country and one of the best stocks but outside the 6nm makes it difficult to get any more sustainable. SC would like to know if there are any certified crab fisheries supplying China as we need to look at the whole picture. TH states that as well as telling fishermen they have a better stock, you need to prove it and show the use of MSC label. Chloe North came down to see South Devon fishermen and they weren’t very engaged with it. BP agrees with SC, stating that fishermen will take issue to the fact that they might not get a better price with MSC and – that in terms of the inshore fleet – have been demonstrably sustainable with their fishing practices already.

The group discusses what is the best practice to have in the face of a declining stock, as currently there are a lot of data gaps. CS believes it is in large scale reduction in effort, be it pots or licences, but BP believes that the offshore will be the issue, with lots of <15m ‘rule breaker’ vessels being produced, and large new vessels potentially having 5000 pots. TH states that what is evident from the meeting is the need for effort management in these fisheries but there is work to be done to re-energise the FIP as he sees it as a good vehicle to reduce effort across the board. TH is pleased MMO and Defra are interested and urges JP and MS to chase this up.

**Action: JP and MS to follow up with Cefas on level of external impacts e.g. coming from the Thames region**

JP suggests discussing the value of MSC and the market pressure with the MSC commercial team to identify what is going to the Asian market and see if there are examples of where benefits have occurred in fisheries such as this after obtaining certification. MSC will provide an update ahead of the next steering group meeting.

Due to time restrictions, Gus’s report will be recirculated for review with what specifics need checking. In regards to next steps, JP states that we should have another call in 6 week time so that MSC can report how discussions have gone with Defra/MMO and also Cefas.

**Action: MSC to send CS Gus’s report**

**Action: MSC to create pull out for crab and lobster fishery benefits**

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| **Action** | **Lead** |
| MS to follow up with SC on FMP work.  | MS & SC |
| MSC to check with Cefas into data collection, and have them review the HCR table for thoughts on what might make a difference to stock levels | JP & MS |
| MSC to follow up with Defra and MMO on this point | JP & MS (Hubert Gieschen & Jenny Murray) |
| SC to work on a comparative piece to Adam’s work | SC |
| MSC to obtain fishing data from MMO from outside the 6nm | JP & MS |
| MSC to contact Cornwall and IoS IFCAs to get information on recreational fishing  | JP & MS |
| MSC to follow up on TH statement with Defra and MMO to identify how receptive they are to the idea. | JP, MS & TH |
| JP and MS to follow up with Cefas on level of external impacts e.g. coming from the Thames region | JP & MS |
| MSC to share Gus’ report with the group | MS |
| MSC to create a pull out for C+L fishery benefits | JP & MS |