**Project UK Stage Two: *Nephrops***

**(Facilitated by the MSC)**

Thursday 28th November 2019, 10.00 – 15:30

Macmillan Room, Mansion House, Edinburgh Zoo, Edinburgh EH12 6TS

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**Attending**

BA: Barry Harland Whitby

CB: Cass Bromley SNH

CP: Claire Pescod Macduff

CM: Cameron Moffat Young’s

DW: Dan Whittle Whitby (Chair)

EW: Elaine Whyte CFA

FN: Fiona Nimmo Poseidon

GB: Giles Bartlett Whitby

JP: Jo Pollett MSC

KK: Katie Keay MSC

MM: Mike Mitchell Marks & Spencer

MP: Mike Park SWFPA

MS: Matt Spencer MSC

SB: Stuart Bell Marine Scotland

WD: Will Davies Seachill

**Dial-in**

AC: Annika Clements Seafish

AJ: Aisla Jones Co-Op

DC: Debbie Crockard Scot-Link

EG: Emily Gibbs WWF-UK

JPR: Joe Prosho Morrisons

**Apologies**

Allan McCulla ANIFPO

Ben Collier N. Ireland Gear Trials

Calum Duncan Scot-Link

Ewen Bell Cefas

Harry Wick NIFPO

Jimmy Buchan SSA

Jemima Jewell Waitrose

Malcom Morrison SFF

Melissa Tillotson Waitrose

Paul Medley Poseidon

**Guest speaker**

PT: Phil Taylor Open Seas

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss progress on the Stage 2 Action Plan for *Nephrops*; to discuss the updates to governance and branding; and to invite Open Seas to present to the group.

**Governance update**

KK updated the group on the governance and Terms of Reference (ToR) consultation process to date. This had included an online survey, a webinar and draft ToR sent to the group and was in the final stages of agreement. She stated that some feedback was received at the Project UK scallop meeting the day before (27 November) and requested that members do not share the latest ToR outside their organisations until further notice.

The result of the naming exercise is that Project UK, not PUKFI, will be the formal name going forward. The secretariat will develop a communications plan to share with the group with a view to creating a set of templates and stand-alone website in 2020.

KK summarised the feedback from the scallop meeting the day before in relation to the draft Project UK logo that had been previously shared with all Steering Group members by email. These included altering the map in the ‘O’ to include Orkneys and Shetlands and generally focus more on the UK; to try replacing the ‘O’ in project with a scallop or other Project UK species to have FIP-specific logos as well as the overarching logo; to test the logo on different print materials and have a black and white option or a border; to alter the line between ‘Project UK’ and ‘Delivering fishery improvements in the North East Atlantic’ to look like waves and give the logo more of a marine theme, because the map in the ‘O’ made it look like a terrestrial project if the tag line wasn’t included; and to try moving the tag line closer to the Project UK wording. The group supported these suggestions.

EW commented on the feedback from CFA members who had concerns that the ToR contradict requirements from Marine Scotland. KK told the group that this was discussed the day before and the action was for the secretariat to organise a meeting with the CFA, IFGs and Marine Scotland in the new year to ensure there is no conflict.

EW commented on the feedback from CFA members who had concerns that the ToR contradict requirements from Marine Scotland. KK told the group that this was discussed the day before and the action was for the secretariat to organise a meeting with the CFA, IFGs and Marine Scotland in the new year to ensure there is no conflict.

**Action: Secretariat to develop Project UK logo further, based on feedback, and update the group on the outcome, and ask members not to share the Terms of Reference beyond their organisations until further notice.**

**Principle 1 updates**

*Action 1: Stock Status*

FN highlighted that overall the stock levels are currently good, suggesting that the current management is working. All but two FUs score SG80 or above, and the majority of stocks were well above MSY Btrig. FN noted that 91% of landings from this FIP are coming from FUs that are SG80 or above.

The group discussed the potential of using a buffer score (‘Bbuff’) to build in a precautionary approach before Btrig is reached. This would help avoid issues where a data delay could have negative impacts on the stock. . FN remembered the Danish *Nephrops* fishery where there was disagreement on stock status; this could have relevant transferable information.

**Action: FN to check the pre-assessment of the Danish *Nephrops* fishery for transferable learnings.**

*Actions 2 & 3: Harvest Strategy and Harvest Control Rules*

Through consultation with the Steering Group, it has already been established that TAC by FU and effort by FU are not workable management options for industry. FN presented Paul Medley’s (PM) draft report on the Harvest Strategy Development Project, which has already been circulated to the Steering Group for feedback. FN noted that some organisations had provided input but asked for additional input from others.

The report recommends that technical measures are developed for each FU; these can offer flexibility to fishermen because there are no direct interferences, however they can be complex and have indirect consequences as well as risk decreasing fishing efficiency. The group requested that the report title is clarified to show it is a ‘non-TAC FU management plan’, and that the table on p10 illustrates it clearly with ticks and crosses.

Regarding its publication, DW asked what the risk might be if it was delayed and whether it would it affect the FIP rating on FisheryProgress. The group decided that any delay could have consequences for the FIPs rating. MP informed the group of the complexities of the report and the work going on in this FIP given the current socio-political complexities – Brexit, and noted the need to be considerate of the views of other organisations whilst working in this FIP. EW agreed.

FN stressed that technical measures would only be triggered once the stock fell below Btrig (or Bbuff), it would not apply otherwise. Examples of technical measures include minimum landing sizes, regulation of engine power, gear design, and spatial and/or temporal fishing restrictions. Industry and management groups (including Marine Scotland, Daera and Defra) would need to discuss what is most appropriate for their FUs. The options presented should be considered as a toolbox that respective management groups could select from, according the needs of the respective FU. EW suggested seeking input from Inshore Fishing Groups (IFGs). Most of the group felt that technical measures take local opinion into account and help ensure buy-in. MP questioned whether once a stock has recovered, if technical measures do not remain in place, does the fishery run the risk of coming in and out of certification (a ‘yo-yo’ fishery). He pointed out that Bbuff could help counter this.

FN said PM wants to create a live-time approach (i.e. daily updates) to monitoring catch per unit effort (CPUE) data using his previous experience with Brown shrimp from the Wash. This could help combat the lag in data available to fisheries managers and feed directly into management decisions. MP referenced a proactive fishery with the Farne Deeps where they worked with the UK Government to help set up a successful recovery plan. MP questioned who will be evaluating the success of these measures if/when the UK is no longer part of the EU (currently the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, STECF) and felt this is another discussion to be had with Marine Scotland; SB agreed.

FN recommended at least one pilot project on each coast. EW said that the Clyde fishery will not want to be the first pilot as they already host a number of schemes. Other than pilot projects, the group suggested hosting workshops with key stakeholders between Steering Group meetings, and the secretariat agreed this was something it could organise. The group decided it best to reflect on the pilot project suggestion and contact the relevant people before further decisions are made. GB noted that FUs 14 and 15 are included in the Irish Prawn FIP and recommended engaging with them in areas that overlap. FN supported this idea and noted this would help harmonisation in the future.

To conclude the next steps, DW asked the group whether to move forward with regional management groups and technical measures. EW objected, saying that the group needs to engage with the IFGs, which can represent local fishermen, and Marine Scotland before this progresses. The next steps will be to speak with relevant stakeholders (including IFGs, Marine Scotland, Cefas and Daera). CP asked whether we will have begun outreach by the next meeting, and the secretariat confirmed it would. Several attendees offered to support the secretariat with these meetings where possible and appropriate (EW, WD, CP, MM and DW).

**Actions:**

* **Steering Group members to get in touch with FN/PM before mid-January to provide any additional input to the draft Harvest Strategy Development Report.**
* **FN/PM to change to the title to clarify it is a ‘non-TAC FU management plan’, and the table on p10 includes ‘ticks and crosses’ to illustrate the recommendations clearly.**
* **Secretariat to meet with relevant stakeholders (including the Irish FIP and regional institutions - IFGs, Marine Scotland, Cefas and Daera) to discuss progress on the action plan and management measures. Support offered from EW, WD, CP, MM and DW.**

*Action 4: Information and Monitoring*

JP updated the group from an email from Marine Scotland Science (MSS). In 2019 MSS sampled all Scottish functional units (FUs). MSS stated that all Scottish FUs will be surveyed annually and the request is with the ships logistic officer for 2020. If there are any constraints (e.g. time, weather, ship or equipment) the data-limited FUs (10 & 34) will not be surveyed. In relation to FU5, Cefas did not survey it in 2019, and it was last surveyed in 2012. Members of the group wanted to know why some FUs, like Botney Gut, are not surveyed. MP suggested it could be its historically low importance and DW mentioned it could be due to the shared status of the FU between England and Scotland. FN and JP agreed that it is something that will need to be asked of Marine Scotland and Cefas.

The group decided it would be useful to understand the ICES working group’s ToR, as it was mentioned that the Scallop steering group had found this useful.

**Actions:**

* **Secretariat to ask Cefas (Ewen Bell) and Marine Scotland (Carlos Mesquita) for information on why some FUs are not surveyed, and request a copy of the ICES working group ToR.**

*Action 5: Assessment of Stock Status*

Lynda Blackadder (LB) dialled in and informed the group that ICES are working on stock reference points and there is no further update since the last meeting. The ICES *Nephrops* working group is taking place in November to review methodology and performance of reference points for Category 1 stocks. If they have time, they will also discuss approaches to data limited stocks.

MP mentioned a pre-assessment report that was conducted on *Nephrops* stock status a few years previously. All FU areas were to be assessed but this was abandoned because they had concerns it could create a market disadvantage between the differing FUs.

EW discussed the risk of reputational damage if a FIP gained certification but subsequently lost it. EW referred to the perceived reputational damage the cod and mackerel fisheries had suffered since losing its certified status. Others disagreed saying they felt this FIP will help improve the *Nephrops* fishery’s reputation, not dent it – with this enhanced reputation particularly beneficial for retailers. MP noted that in 2009 retailer Marks and Spencer (M&S) said that from 2012 M&S would only purchase MSC certified products. This commitment contributed to SFSAG putting several fisheries into certification. MM reinforced the importance of Project UK, saying that if this project did not exist some retailers would stop selling *Nephrops* altogether. MM mentioned that it had traditionally been more difficult to reach the inshore groups but would welcome any opportunity to meet.

**Actions:**

* **Secretariat to follow up with LB on updates from recent ICES *Nephrops* meeting.**
* **MP to send the *Nephrops* pre-assessment to FN**

**Principle 2 updates**

*Action 6: Primary Species*

FN stated that the scores for whiting have not changed, but cod has reduced to 60. The steering group needs to decide how to proceed and how this FIP aligns with the cod FIP (and its Action Plan).

LB updated that MSS had conducted catch estimation assessments for primary species at the stock assessment level. For *Nephrops* this meant conducting assessments at the FU scale, but demersal fish are divided into much larger areas such as ICES Subarea 4 (North Sea), ICES subarea 6 (West coast) and so on. Catch estimations for all species at FU level had not been attempted as MSS is not certain that sampling levels are appropriate for this. However, LB noted that some preliminary work had been carried out in the Clyde region by Liz Clarke (LC, MSS). JP informed the group that species at FU level has been done by SFF after speaking with LC.

FN felt this action should be a priority. MP noted that West of Scotland cod is going through a benchmarking exercise, the results of which will be presented at the next ICES meeting. There is an assumption that the biological status of West of Scotland cod will change but the group was unsure whether this would change the score. If the benchmarking exercise takes place in early 2020 then significant results would appear in the output of the June ICES advice.

MP stated that they aim to get the North Sea cod stock above Btrig for the first time since the 1980s and that the North Sea cod benchmarking will be in 2021. MP mentioned he had a paper on improving the stock for cod and is happy to share this with the group. DW remembered haddock went through a similar model reassessment and benchmarking exercise and it changed the prediction of the stock; this might have been applicable to haddock but the group acknowledged the need for evidence to prove that whiting is not part of the catch – landed or discards. SB informed the group that finfish is outside of his remit, but he would come back to the group with information.

The group then discussed exemptions of *Nephrops* in the landing obligation (LO). It was noted that unless there is a derogation, these fisheries count towards the LO. This action on understanding primary species as part of the fishery will need to be done with Marine Scotland and a reputable academic. It can be costly to get rid of the fish.

DW moved the discussion to bait that is utilised in the fishery and questioned what the progress was on this front. FN stated she considers the action complete with the group keeping a view on it.

DW thought an intern could help progress this action. JP said SNH are still looking into the process of taking on interns.

**Actions:**

* **JP to get information from work conduction in the Clyde region from LC and distribute to Steering Group.**
* **MP to share cod paper with the steering group.**
* **SB to share more information on whiting bycatch in the *Nephrops* fishery with the group.**
* **FN to change this task (6b) to completed on the action plan.**

*Action 7: Secondary Species*

The group discussed the lack of creel fishermen present in the steering group but EW made the point that CFA represents a lot of creelers. To progress this action, the steering group needs more accurate data. AC noted that she is seeking more data from Strangford Loch. SB noted that the granularity of data from small vessels had improved and suggested speaking with IFGs**.**

**Action: SB and EW to encourage IFG members to attend the next Project UK (Stage Two) meetings.**

*Action 8: ETP*

The environmental sub-group has progressed this action. EG contacted JNCC and Daera and received feedback. The group decided that a priority mapping exercise should be added to the Action Plan and questioned whether this is something Open Seas could contribute to. BL mentioned Aberdeen University is looking at the spatial overlap of this fishery with elasmobranchs. JP said this task is also being covered by a prospective Master’s student with funding support from Fishmongers’ Hall and noted that these two projects should align. EW stated Marine Protected Area Management and Monitoring (MARPAMM) projects are also being conducted in the Irish sea so there could be useful overlaps and information going on in those projects.

**Actions:**

* **FN to add a priority ETP mapping exercise to the action plan.**
* **Secretariat and BL to discuss alignment of Master’s placements.**
* **EW and MSC to monitor the MARPAMM projects to ascertain useful information and overlaps in workings.**

*Action 9: Habitats*

The steering group concluded that this action had progressed well and would continue through the upcoming Master’s students. Shapefiles necessary to continue this work had been assimilated by FN and will be shared when the student is appointed.

**Action: FN to share habitats shapefiles once MSc student is appointed.**

*Action 10: Ecosystems*

The steering group agreed that this action requires additional external expertise for further progress, particularly in relation to the scale intensity and consequence analysis (SICA).

**Action: Steering group to provide the secretariat with recommendations of individuals and/or organisations to help with Action 10.**

**Principle 3 updates**

*Action 11: Compliance and Enforcement*

DW pointed out that with the current issues around Brexit and a possible new Fisheries Bill, a new political regime could be on the horizon and this may alter what compliance looks like. DC remarked that the Fisheries Bill will mainly apply to England and that Scotland might take a different approach. The group agreed that this action will take time.

FN pointed out that currently the action is scoring 60-79, so it is not technically failing. GB questioned whether there is a risk of non-compliance being an issue as the score is based on best current science. The group suggested asking Marine Scotland to provide a record of non-compliance in relation to the LO within this fleet. In terms of data the group hoped to obtain from Marine Scotland, the group would only be interested in specific examples of systematic non-compliance e.g. one rule being broken and/or one vessel continually not complying. SB stated that Marine Scotland Compliance does keep a record of all non-compliances.

**Action: SB to provide and anonymised record of non-compliance to the Steering Group.**

MM stated that in the absence of real-time data or at-sea monitoring it is very hard to know whether vessels are complying or not. MM continued and said that no at-sea data is a real challenge is ascertaining what is occurring within the fishery. This is apt for many fisheries across the globe, but MM stated that this and FU management are the two biggest issues this FIP faces. The group acknowledged it would be a good idea to get an idea of the level of observer coverage.

DC recommended DG MARE Fisheries Control and Inspection group who also report significant non-compliance with the LO. However, this is across the EU, but may be worthwhile contacting them.

FN concluded this action and stated the more detail we can get on this point the better. She also recommended that it would be best to have separate meetings for each of the respective enforcement bodies from across the various countries – MMO, Daera, Marine Scotland Compliance.

**Action: Secretariat to contact DG MARE and UK devolved administrations’ enforcement bodies (Marine Scotland, MMO, Daera) to obtain non-compliance information in their relevant *Nephrops* fleets.**

**Open Seas presentation**

Open Seas, an NGO based in Scotland, has requested to become a member of the Stage 2 Scallop and *Nephrops* Steering Groups. Phil Taylor was invited to present to the respective Steering Groups on 27 and 28 November.

PT introduced Open Seas and said their prime focus is raising public awareness around issues of sustainability. Fish are a public resource and should be managed properly, and Scotland’s waters are in a very poor condition. He noted that *Nephrops* is considered high risk on the Seafish Risk Assessment for Sourcing Seafood (RASS) tool. Open Seas is keen to participate in Project UK and contribute to particular actions and believes in the importance of retailers delivering on their sustainability commitments. Based on feedback from the previous meeting (27 November), he had looked at specific actions in the action plan to identify where Open Seas could provide input.

Open Seas is interested in fishing damage on an ecosystem-based level and noted that the level of bycatch in the *Nephrops* fishery ranges from 0.1% to 48%. PT referenced a report that shows one of the drivers of decline in whiting and cod is bycatch from the *Nephrops* fisheries. PT suggested another asset Open Seas could provide is their work with cetaceans as they participate in the Scottish Entanglement Alliance.

**Comments and questions**

There was a lot of debate and several questions from the Steering Group throughout PT’s presentation. These are summarised below:

* EW challenged PT to prove that the images presented in the slideshow, that were described as evidence of discarding, did indeed show illegal activity. She said Open Seas needed more substantial proof before going public and blaming vessels and/or fishermen.
* In reference to the images and data PT presented that indicated severely depleted stocks, MP said that the data might not be reflective of the actual stock status due to issues with data and modelling. BL added that Robin Cooke’s paper supports MP’s statement.
* When asked if Open Seas is against mobile gear PT confirmed it is not.
* MP posed a scenario question where if Open Seas was a member of the Steering Group but didn’t think the management plan or action went far enough, would Open Seas condemn the group. PT said that would not be the first step. When pushed for an answer, PT said they would approach it on a case by case basis.
* MM noted that there are tensions between the fishing sector and Open Seas. He questioned the likelihood of Open Seas having a fundamental shift in their strategy from being confrontational to being collegiate if they were members of Project UK. PT stated that participation would not change their mission to have sustainable seas. PT said he thinks the main reason many members participate is to prevent the public calling out their products. The group flatly objected to the statement and noted that many of these FIPs were initiated by industry or the supply chain, with an aim that the could be certified or certifiable by the end of the FIP timeframe.
* MM reinforced the importance of dialogue and said that going directly to the press isn’t always the best option. PT said that he believes the media is a powerful tool. If Open Seas can only be involved without any media or publicity then the Steering Group had made a decision in relation to whether Open Seas should be a member. MM reassured PT that no-one in the group would want to challenge their opportunity for freedom of speech or to suggest not using the media as a tool, but it was a request to do so responsibly and after understanding the roles in the group.
* PT noted that Open Seas would be happy to work with the Steering Group in another capacity (not as a member) but only on the understanding of how their input would be used. In relation to some Open Seas feedback to the Action Plan, FN noted it resulted in a change to the scoring but that formal feedback hadn’t been presented then, and perhaps should be next time.
* Several members stated that whether or not Open Seas is a member, there is value in increased dialogue and in identifying opportunities to work together.

After PT left there was further discussion amongst Steering Group members.

**Agreed:** **There was consensus amongst attendees that Open Seas could provide valuable input to the group but due to concerns over constructive participation, membership in the Steering Group is not appropriate. Some specific suggestions were identified, and the secretariat will develop and organise these opportunities in 2020.**

**Actions:**

* **PT to share the cod and whiting bycatch report with the Steering Group.**
* **BL to circulate the Robin Cooke stock status paper with the Steering Group.**
* **Secretariat to respond to Open Seas’ request to join Project UK and discuss suggestions of how they can meaningfully participate in 2020.**

**Next steps and AOB**

KK informed the group that next steps will be drafting out the minutes in the next two weeks for the group to comment on. Also informed the steering group that in due course there will be a vote on Open Seas membership. The next Doodlepoll would be sent for March/April 2020, and would be aligned with the annual review of the Action Plan.

**Actions:**

* **Secretariat to draft minutes and distribute for feedback; attendees to review.**
* **The next meeting will be in March/April 2020 and the secretariat will share a Doodlepoll to secure a date.**

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| **Tasks** | **Responsibilities** |
| **Governance update**   * Secretariat to develop Project UK logo further, based on feedback, and update the group on the outcome, and ask members not to share the Terms of Reference beyond their organisations until further notice. | **MSC** |
| ***Actions 1,2,3***   * FN to check the pre-assessment of the Danish *Nephrops* fishery for transferable learnings. * Steering Group members to get in touch with FN/PM before mid-January to provide any additional input to the draft Harvest Strategy Development Report. * FN/PM to change to the title to clarify it is a ‘non-TAC FU management plan’, and the table on p10 includes ‘ticks and crosses’ to illustrate the recommendations clearly. * Secretariat to meet with relevant stakeholders (including the Irish FIP and regional institutions - IFGs, Marine Scotland, Cefas and Daera) to discuss progress on the action plan and management measures. Support offered from EW, WD, CP, MM and DW. | **FN**  **Steering Group**  **FN/PM**  **MSC** |
| ***Action 4 - Information and Monitoring***   * Secretariat to ask Cefas (Ewen Bell) and Marine Scotland (Carlos Mesquita) for information on why some FUs are not surveyed, and request a copy of the ICES working group ToR. | **MSC** |
| ***Action 5 - Assessment of Stock Status***   * Secretariat to follow up with LB on updates from recent ICES *Nephrops* meeting. * MP to send the *Nephrops* pre-assessment to FN. | **MSC**  **MP** |
| ***Action 6 - Primary Species***   * JP to get information from work conduction in the Clyde region from LC and distribute to Steering Group. * MP to share cod paper with the steering group. * SB to share more information on whiting bycatch in the *Nephrops* fishery with the group. * FN to change this task (6b) to completed on the action plan. | **JP**  **MP**  **SB**  **FN** |
| ***Action 7 - Secondary Species***   * SB and EW to encourage IFG members to attend the next Project UK (Stage Two) meetings. | **SB, EW** |
| ***Action 8 - ETP***   * FN to add a priority ETP mapping exercise to the action plan. * Secretariat and BL to discuss alignment of Master’s placements. * EW and MSC to monitor the MARPAMM projects to ascertain useful information and overlaps in workings. | **FN**  **MSC**  **EW, MSC** |
| ***Action 9 – Habitats***   * FN to share habitats shapefiles once MSc student is appointed. | **FN** |
| ***Action 10 - Ecosystems***   * Steering group to provide the secretariat with recommendations of individuals and/or organisations to help with Action 10. | **Steering Group** |
| ***Action 11 - Compliance and Enforcement***   * SB to provide and anonymised record of non-compliance to the Steering Group. * Secretariat to contact DG MARE and UK devolved administrations’ enforcement bodies (Marine Scotland, MMO, Daera) to obtain non-compliance information in their relevant *Nephrops* fleets. | **SB**  **MSC** |
| **Open Sea presentation**   * PT to share the cod and whiting bycatch report with the Steering Group. * BL to circulate the Robin Cooke stock status paper with the Steering Group. * Secretariat to respond to Open Seas’ request to join Project UK and discuss suggestions of how they can meaningfully participate in 2020.   *Open Seas agreement:*  There was consensus amongst attendees that Open Seas could provide valuable input to the group but due to concerns over constructive participation, membership in the Steering Group is not appropriate. Some specific suggestions were identified, and the secretariat will develop and organise these opportunities in 2020. | **PT**  **BL**  **MSC** |
| **Next steps and AOB**   * Secretariat to draft minutes and distribute for feedback; attendees to review. * Annual review of the Action Plan conducted by next meeting. * The next meeting will be in March/April 2020 and the secretariat will share a Doodlepoll to secure a date. | **MSC**  **FN**  **MSC** |