Minutes: crab and lobster meeting 

Meeting Date: 24 June 2021

Location: Teams

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Attendees | Organisation |
| BP: Beshlie Pool | South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen |
| CP: Claire Pescod | Macduff Shellfish |
| CS: Chloe Smith | Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority |
| DM: David Markham | Blue Sea Food Company |
| GC: Gus Caslake | Seafish |
| HG: Hubert Gieschen | Marine Management Organisation |
| HH: Helen Hunter | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| JB: John Balls | North Devon Fishermen’s Association |
| JM: Joanna Messini | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| JP: Jo Pollett | Marine Stewardship Council |
| KK: Katie Keay | Marine Stewardship Council |
| MS: Matt Spencer | Marine Stewardship Council |
| NdR: Nathan de Rozarieux | Falfish |
| RC: Robyn Cloake | Labeyrie Fine Foods |
| RM: Ros McIntyre | Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science |
| SC: Sarah Clark | Devon and Severn Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority |
| SM: Seth McCurry | Marine Stewardship Council |
| TH: Tim Huntington | Poseidon |
| **Apologies** |  |
| Matt Johnson | Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| Martyn Youell | Waterdance |

Purpose of the meeting

This call was an opportunity for the Steering Group to review progress made against each of the actions in the crab and lobster Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) action plan and get an update on the global market for MSC labelled crab and lobster products.

Agenda Item 1: Poseidon annual review summary

Poseidon recently conducted annual reviews for all Project UK FIPs and TH presented the latest updates in the crab and lobster FIP.

Overview:

* Four Performance Indicators (PIs) are still scoring 60-79
* Main issues in Principle 1 are developing a harvest strategy and appropriate harvest control rules (HCRs).
* PI 1.2.2 harvest control rules (HCRs) is still scoring <60.
* Principle 2 and 3 are all scoring 60-79 or >80.

Principle 1:

* Latest stock assessment indicated that stock size is around MSY and the exploitation rate of crab is moderate in western Channel and in the Celtic Sea.
* Lobster in the south west below MSY target and the exploitation rate is moderate
* Stocks for both species are currently healthy, but the Steering Group will need to monitor any changes.
* PIs 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 are all behind target and significant work remains to improve these scores.
* The Steering Group needs to formalise an explicit harvest strategy for inside and outside 6nm.
* Greater data needed in understanding actual fishing effort in the Unit of Assessment (UoA) of the FIP.

Principle 2:

* A lot of progress has been made on catch composition and bait milestones, which has improved scores in Principle 2.
* The Steering Group need to raise awareness of the South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen (SDCS) endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species reporting protocol to all members of the FIP.

Principle 3:

* Explicit short and long-term fishery specific objectives need to be agreed on and added to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP).
* TH recommended adding a few paragraphs in the FMP outlining the stakeholder agreement on short and long-term objectives e.g. limit effort over short term and building stocks over long-term.

*Discussion*:

The Steering Group discussed the possibility of an extension to the FIP timeline, to account for delays caused by Brexit and Covid-19. CP encouraged the Steering Group to monitor the progress the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) Crab Management Group (CMG) makes over the next few months before making any decision around extending the FIP timeline. JP said it was important to remain aligned with the CMG and that the Steering Group can discuss any timeline extension as a rolling agenda point.

Actions from Item 1:

1. Secretariat to table FIP extension discussion as an agenda point in the next Steering Group meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Client group composition

At the last Steering Group meeting there was a presentation on the MSC certification process, and since then the Secretariat has received questions from Steering Group members about client group formation.

Overview:

* A client group could be an individual, organisation or group of organisations who make a formal application for their fishery to be assessed against the MSC Fisheries Standard.
* Previous fishery clients have included government agencies, fishing industry associations, fisheries cooperatives, local management authorities and collaborations between fishing industry associations, conservation and community groups.
* Fishery clients are responsible for:
  + Researching and entering into a legal agreement with an accredited certification body (this means they must be a legally constituted body).
  + Coordinating the funding of the cost of certification.
  + Ensuring the certification body is aware of stakeholders who should be contacted to be involved in the assessment ensuring that the assessment team has unrestricted access to data and information about the fishery.
  + Implementing any improvements (conditions) placed on the fishery if/when the MSC certificate is issued.

Client group examples:

* Poole Harbour (Southern Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority [IFCA])
  + Membership: fishing license holders and processors.
  + Seafish and Resource Legacy Fund, funded but now IFCA funded, permit fee (Ocean Stewardship Fund for actions).
* Wash brown shrimp (Association)
  + Membership: fishing license holders and processors.
  + Self-funding by markets sales.
* Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation scallops (Regional Inshore Fisheries Group)
  + Membership: fishing license holders.
  + European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and local council funding for 110% costs.
* Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group (SFSAG) white fish (Association)
  + Membership: Producer Organisations.
  + Funded through membership fees.

JP concluded by saying the assessment process could take up to 18 months depending on the availability of the conformity assessment body (CAB), the size of the fishery and number of stakeholders, and the access to requirement documentation.

*Discussion:*

The Secretariat contacted the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) grants team about the possibility for client groups to access funding support for MSC assessment costs, under the Fisheries and Seafood Scheme. However, any grant would have to be spent out before January 2022 to complete the reimbursement process before the end of the MMO’s financial year. This would not align with the Round 1 FIPs’ timeline but KK said the MMO hoped to have a similar scheme in place for the following financial year.

NdR cautioned that stakeholders who do not perceive the benefits of MSC are unlikely to commit to the MSC assessment. NdR explained that there is often reluctance from the catching sector to commit to MSC certification, as they perceive there to be minimal benefit to them, whereas other parts of the supply chain are more positive about MSC.

NdR suggested that the Scottish Fisheries Sustainable Accreditation Group (SFSAG) was a good model to replicate, with the cost of MSC certification shared cost across the Producer Organisations.

CP stressed the importance of not overburdening the catching sector with the cost of certification. CP asked NdR how best to communicate to the catching sector the demands processors are under to provide MSC certified product. NdR said fishers will always question the value and cost of MSC certification every time there is a surveillance or recertification. NdR recommended being up front and honest with them, informing them that benefits of MSC certification often come from access to markets and potentially a growth in volume for markets. GC said this highlights the importance of the composition of the client group. In the Cornish sardines fishery it is a mixture of catchers and processors, and it is the processors that explain the value and importance of MSC.

Agenda Item 3: FisheryProgress.org social policy introduction

FisheryProgress.org has recently introduced a new human rights and social responsibility policy which will be phased in over the course of the next year for all FIPs on FisheryProgress.org. It is important the Steering Group understand the new requirements as members will need to provide information to comply with the policy.

Overview:

* The Steering Group will have to sign up to a code of conduct, which the Secretariat can coordinate with agreement from members.
* There is a requirement to provide a vessel list for each FIP.
* All vessels and fishers involved in the FIP should be aware of rights, and grievance mechanism in place to lodge issues.
* A self-evaluation of the FIP needs to be undertaken, and if any risk is identified then the FIP will have to deliver a risk assessment plan.

The risk assessment criteria:

* There is transhipment of products and/or fishers.
* The FIP has one or more vessels with a significant migrant workforce (defined as 25% or more of the fishers not from the vessel’s flag state).
* The FIP has one or more vessels where the fishers are not allowed on shore every 90 days.
* The fishery has a known instance of forced labour, child labour or human trafficking abuse within the past four years.
* The FIP does not have enough information to determine if it meets the criteria above.

Next steps for the FIP:

* Secretariat to circulate Code of Conduct with the Steering Group.
* Steering Group input on FIP self-assessment.
* Draft a vessel list for the FIP.
* Secretariat to arrange full presentation on the policy from FisheryProgress.org.

*Discussion:*

NdR believed compliance with the ILO188 regulation should put the FIP in a good position to address the needs to the FisheryProgress.org and recommended benchmarking the requirements of the ILO188 against the new social policy requirements. It was suggested that Seafish could conduct benchmarking exercise to understand where ILO188 sits against the social policy requirements.

Agenda Item 4: Marine Stewardship Council crab and lobster commercial update

Seth McCurry, Senior Commercial Manager for UK & Ireland, was invited to provide insights into commercial markets for MSC products, with a focus on MSC certified crab and lobster. Key messages from SM’s presentation were:

**UK market:**

* £1.2bn spent on MSC labelled products in UK in 2020/21.
* Roughly a third of all retail seafood sales in the UK are MSC labelled, driven predominantly by chilled-prepared and frozen-prepared categories.
* 48 species sold, up from 33 six years ago.
* Loss of mackerel is cause for decline in 2020/21 against year before rather than consumers moving away from the label.
* Foodservice was particularly badly affected by Covid but SM believed it was important to recognise the receptive and growing foodservice market.

**Sourcing policies**

* Strong retailer commitments helping to drive UK growth of MSC labelled product sales.
* Sainsbury’s, Waitrose and Tesco all have targets to have 100% of their wild seafood range certified sustainable Species without label coverage yet will be key to supporting retailers sourcing goals.

**International markets**

* UK, France and Germany account for about a third of all MSC labelled products, although shifts are emerging as US market receptivity is growing.
* US market doubled from 2017/18 to 2020/21.
* US by value now a larger MSC market than UK
* Southern European markets are also growing strongly, especially in France, Spain, Portugal and Italy.

**MSC crab and lobster markets**

* Crab:
  + Nine MSC-certified fisheries globally, covering six species.
  + A further three crab fisheries are in assessment.
  + In 2020/21 MSC labelled crab sold in eight countries.
  + MSC labelled product sales more than doubled globally between 2016/17 and 2020/21 with consumer spending reaching approximately £57.9m in 2020/21.
  + Very little MSC labelled crab sold in the UK.
* Lobster:
  + 11 certified fisheries globally, covering nine species.
  + A further one fishery in assessment.
  + Normandy and Jersey lobster only certified European lobster fishery.
  + In 2020/21, MSC labelled lobster sold in 25 countries.
  + MSC labelled product sales increased by 1.5x between 2016/17 and 2020/21, with consumer spending reaching approximately £59.5m in 2020/21.
  + Market data for MSC labelled lobster showed near doubling of sales from 2019/20 to 2020/21 in the UK.
  + There were 20 stock keeping units (SKUs) in 2020/21 compared with 7 in 2016/17, with around two thirds of frozen lobster sold in the UK being MSC certified.
* Overall, the volume of MSC certified and labelled crab and lobster sold globally has been driven by Canada and the US.

Agenda Item 5: Harvest strategy

The main action still to be addressed in the FIP action plan is the development of a robust harvest strategy. The new UK Fisheries Act requires overarching objectives for fisheries management detailed in a species-specific fisheries management plan (FMP) so it is important that the Steering Group develops a harvest strategy which aligns with harvest strategy discussions being had in the Crab Management Group.

RM shared a first draft harvest strategy, which has been discussed by the Management Sub Group. The main concern is that lack of management in the offshore area of the fishery, as the IFCA areas are already well managed. HG said the MMO was committed to improving the fishery, evidenced by the latent capacity consultation due in July 2021, and wanted to remind the FIP that MMO commitment is as strong as ever. TH said there was never concern around MMO commitment but that the biggest concern with having an adequate harvest strategy lay in addressing management outside the 6nm. TH reminded the Steering Group that the stock indicators were positive at the time of the meeting but without proper management these indicators could change. The fishery needs to agree a management response to changing stock indicators, both inside the 6nm and outside the 6nm. CP suggested that the gap in management outside the 6nm area that has been highlighted by the FIP could be an agenda point at the next CMG meeting, as it might need to be addressed UK wide.

RM said that if harvest control ules (HCRs) are not written into legislation, they are unlikely to be mandatory so it will be key to get industry input and agreement in the process. TH explained that the MSC Standard was not prescriptive the harvest strategy being defined in legislation, or how it would be enforced, as long as the fishery could demonstrate the measures implemented were effective in managing the stock.

HH highlighted the importance of aligning with the different groups working towards shellfish management in the UK and was interested in knowing what the overlap was between the FIP and these groups. CP said the FIP had already made efforts to ensure alignment with the CMG and jointly discussed having FIP and CMG members involved with the Western Waters alternatives workshops. HH informed the group that Defra were reviewing best practice examples of shellfish management, including whether IFCA measures could be replicated in other jurisdictional areas. BP and TH agreed that harmonising measures across jurisdictional areas is a sensible approach from a logistical viewpoint but implementation would require the willingness of the catching sector.

SC said IFCAs management approaches in the south west are broadly harmonised. Southern IFCA has slightly different management measures that the other IFCAs in the south west, and CS said Southern IFCA was is reviewing both its pot fishing and minimum conservation reference size management measures and should be able to update the group on any changes at the next Steering Group meeting. CS added the Southern IFCA are aiming to align with the other IFCAs and had a working group meeting in July to discuss introducing any new measures.

In July Defra intend to release a call for evidence on two key topics, latent capacity in the >10m shellfish fleets and greater restrictions on <15m fleet in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These two calls for evidence are part of wider management considerations for the UK shellfish sector. The call for evidence duration will be six weeks and JM stressed how important it was for relevant stakeholders to get in contact with Defra.

Next steps:

TH welcomed the news that Southern IFCA was considering harmonising with other IFCAs in the south west and suggested that updating the harvest strategy may need to wait until the Southern IFCA review had been conducted.

KK asked whether the draft harvest strategy for this FIP should be shared with the wider Steering Group, and possibly with the CMG. TH and CP agreed it should be shared with the wider Steering Group and management bodies, and CP cautioned that it should be in a near-finalised position before oversharing with the CMG. HH said there was no fixed date for the Western Waters workshops (which were initially intended for May/early June), but asked if there was a timeline that would suit the FIP.

***Actions from item 5***:

1. Secretariat to:
   1. Share draft harvest strategy with the Steering Group for comment and review.
   2. Work with CP and HH on timeline for next Western Waters workshop based on CMG and the FIP timelines.
   3. Facilitate a harvest strategy sub-group meeting for all management bodies to attend: IFCAs, MMO, Defra and Cefas.
   4. Raise management gaps identified by the FIP with the CMG as they develop their management plans.
2. CP to:
   1. to table management gaps outside the 6nm on the agenda for the next CMG meeting.
   2. Summarise the CMG paper for potential management options and add to the harvest strategy.
3. CS to update Steering Group on Southern IFCA management review.

Agenda Item 6: Effort data

This is a new milestone identified during the most recent annual review conducted by Poseidon. The review highlighted the need to understand the level of effort on crab and lobster stocks in the south west.

JM believed that effort should be monitored through the MMO and offered to pass on an information request to the MMO from Defra. HG explained that there are crab recording requirements but there are some issues around the alignment of data for sub-areas straddling UK/EU waters. Currently effort days only apply to the >15m fleet in the UK, whereas in EU waters effort days no longer apply at all. Currently, to land shellfish against a days at sea approach, the main gauge of effort is through pot limits attached to shellfish permits. However, even without a permit it is permissible to catch and retain 25 crab and 5 lobster per day. Those with a shellfish permit are required to return monthly shellfish records and HG encouraged the Steering Group members to enquire with him for more information.

TH thanked HG for his information and noted that the FMP needs a description of what effort data is recorded and how is it collected, and what the requirements are for different metiers e.g. > and < 15m, shellfish permit vs non shellfish permit. HG reminded the group that the 12-15m vessels are only required to provide shellfish landings and not any effort data such as number of pots used. HG agreed to consolidate the information on reporting requirements for different metiers and share with the Secretariat.

SC said the Cornwall IFCA has a great dataset on pots and soak time, and that Devon and Severn IFCA have an approximate idea of effort through the permit system. HG did not believe the MMO had any data on accurate effort in the south west.

TH suggested the Steering Group draft a table showing what data is required to be submitted and how it is collected, which should indicate the differing approaches across the IFCAs and the MMO. SC said the CMG had planned to conduct similar work, which CP agreed with and offered to follow up with Matt Johnson (Defra) to see what progress had been made. JM said Matt Johnson had circulated his review of effective shellfish management to the Devolved Administrations, and offered to update its progress at the next Steering Group meeting. CP offered to coordinate a gap analysis on management measures with Matt Johnson and Seafish and share it with the FIP once complete.

***Action from item 6:***

1. CP to liaise with Matt Johnson to check progress of shellfish management measures report and to arrange a gap analysis with Seafish once the report is completed.
2. HG to consolidate effort information into a table which shows: components of the south west crab and lobster fleet, what data is required to be submitted and how it is collected.
3. JM to request effort information for the south west crab and lobster fishery for both inshore and offshore fleets from MMO contacts.
4. Secretariat to contact JM outlining what is needed in the information request.

Agenda Item 7: Bait

Over the summer of 2020 a catch composition and bait analysis was conducted for the south west crab and lobster fishery by the Steering Group. 14 species of bait were identified as ‘main’ and required further analysis on their stock status and the impact the fishery is having on their populations. These species were mackerel, red gurnard and *Dogfish spp*. Productivity, Susceptibility Analysis (PSA) identified no major bait species failing to meet SG60 but several ‘proxy’ *Dogfish spp* sources were of concern. As a result, the Steering Group need to consider whether alternative to red gurnard and *Dogfish spp* (common and starry smoothhound, lesser spotted catshark) could be used as bait.

The PSA indicated red gurnard is a low-risk bait species but was being used in very large quantities so the Steering Group discussed whether its use could be reduced. NdR said that red gurnard was not a targeted bait species and that it was captured alongside the mixed fishery in the south west. The crab industry use gurnard as bait because otherwise it would be wasted.

The Steering Group previously agreed that nursehound, common and starry smoothhound are very unlikely to be used as bait in the crab and lobster fishery, with lesser spotted catshark the most likely species that *Dogfish spp* applies to. The Steering Group discussed whether it would be possible to discourage the use of lesser spotted catshark in the fishery. BP was cautious about what the alternative bait sources might be, as the FIP would not want to put stress on other species. Terrestrial animal products can’t be used as bait in the crab and lobster fishery and neither can synthetic baits, which can be used as bait elsewhere in the world. TH said if these bait species are by-products of the mixed fishery then that means their use as bait isn’t the driver for these species being caught. The Steering Group agreed that the bait species used in the crab and lobster fishery came from the mixed fishery bycatch and NdR said that it should be seen as a good use of fish caught that are not permissible for human consumption due to being landed under the Landing Obligation so unable to enter the supply chain.

CP asked whether the crab fishery could prove that it wasn’t driving the capture of these species for bait by contacting the monkfish FIP (with a beam trawl component) and asking them to confirm this. TH did not believe this was necessary but said the FMP should have a sentence to explain that the bait used is a non-edible component of the mixed fishery (due to Landing Obligation).

TH said that based on this discussion the fishery probably does not need a bait code of conduct as the fishery is using non-edible part of the catch.

***Action from item 7:***

1. Steering Group to add sentence on bait sources from the mixed fishery into the FMP.

Agenda Item 8: Endangered, Threatened and Protected species

After the recent annual review, the FIP scores above SG80 for all three PIs under ETP. TH reminded the Steering Group that the UoA of the FIP is not in any cetacean migration route but stressed it was important to record cetacean interactions if they do occur. South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen (SDCS) set up an ETP reporting protocol and this should be communicated to all vessels in the FIP.

BP said SDCS had not received any reports of ETP interactions over the past year and agreed to continue sharing the SDCS ETP reporting page web address with the vessels in the FIP. TH explained that even if there are no reported interactions there should still be an annual statement on the SDCS website and in the FMP to reflect that there are no reported interactions. SC informed the Steering Group that Natural England had created a cetacean bycatch decision tree to help guide fishers of what to do in instances of interaction and SC offered to share with the group. TH said the Natural England decision tree needs to be referred to in the FMP.

BP asked whether the Steering Group knew about the Cefas cetacean programme, which GC said was the Defra funded i360 programme carried out in conjunction with Zoological Society London and used Artificial Intelligence technology to monitor cetacean and marine mammal bycatch. RM offered to find out more internally in Cefas and report back to the Steering Group.

CS mentioned that crab and lobster fishermen have to complete catch return forms, and Southern IFCA have an ETP interaction check box. CS asked whether a simple ETP question could be added to the logbooks submitted to the MMO, which could be used to prove the fishery was not interacting with ETP species. HG said it was something that could be asked and he would follow up internally.

TH said the FIP was close to completing this action, and that an annual statement of what had on ETP interaction in the fishery will suffice in the FMP.

***Actions from item 8:***

1. BP to add statement that there have been no ETP interactions reported this year to SDCS website and FMP
2. SC to share Natural England bycatch decision tree with the FIP.
3. RM offered to find out more internally in Cefas about the Defra funded i360 project and share with the Steering Group.
4. HG to check whether a question could be added to the e-logbooks about whether there was an ETP interaction during the trip.

Agenda Item 9: Fishery specific objectives

PI 3.2.1 (fishery specific objectives) still needs to be addressed and will contribute to the harvest strategy. Fishery specific objectives should reflect what the fishery wants to look like in the future: whether the fishery wants to aim towards being export dominated, developing the inshore sector or otherwise, but it would need a regional focus and would need to be documented in the FMP.

CP said the CMG were drafting objectives to identify what the fishery should look like. These were designed for the crab and lobster chapter of the Shellfish Industry Advisory Group proposed recommendation for Defra’s shellfish FMP. TH asked whether the objectives developed by the CMG aligned with requirements of the MSC Standard, and CP offered to review the draft objectives to identify any gaps in the FIP requirements. JP asked whether the IFCAs have any overarching objectives for managing crab stocks, to which SC said they did not but do have by-laws permitted under their duties set out in the Marine and Coastal Access Act.

***Action from item 9:***

1. CP to review CMG objectives and share with FIP Steering Group when possible.

Any Other Business

The draft minutes will be shared with the Steering Group for review in a few weeks.

Meeting Closes

12.30

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Actions Arising | Responsibility |
| **Poseidon annual review summary**   * Secretariat to table FIP extension discussion as an agenda point in the next Steering Group meeting. | **Secretariat** |
| **Harvest strategy**   * Secretariat to:   + Share draft harvest strategy with the Steering Group for comment and review.   + Work with CP and HH on timeline for next Western Waters workshop based on CMG and the FIP timelines.   + Facilitate a harvest strategy sub-group meeting for all management bodies to attend: IFCAs, MMO, Defra and Cefas.   + Raise management gaps identified by the FIP with the CMG as they develop their management plans. * CP to:   + to table management gaps outside the 6nm on the agenda for the next CMG meeting.   + Summarise the CMG paper for potential management options and add to the harvest strategy. * CS to update Steering Group on Southern IFCA management review. | **Secretariat**  **CP**  **CS** |
| **Effort data**   * CP to liaise with Matt Johnson to check progress of shellfish management measures report and to arrange a gap analysis with Seafish once the report is completed. * HG to consolidate effort information into a table which shows: components of the south west crab and lobster fleet, what data is required to be submitted and how it is collected.JM to request effort information from MMO contacts. * Secretariat to contact JM outlining what is needed in the information request. | **CP**  **HG**  **Secretariat** |
| **Bait**   * Steering Group to add sentence on bait source into the FMP. | **Steering Group** |
| **Endangered, Threatened and Protected species**   * BP to add statement that there have been no ETP interactions reported this year to SDCS website and FMP * SC to share Natural England bycatch decision tree with the FIP. * RM offered to find out more internally in Cefas about the Defra funded i360 project. * HG to check whether a question could be added to the e-logbooks about whether there was an ETP interaction during the trip**.** | **BP**  **SC**  **RM**  **HG** |
| **Fishery specific objectives**   * CP to review CMG objectives and share with FIP SG when possible | **CP** |