

Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) Meeting

13 December 2021

Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Barrie Deas, NFFO (Chair)	John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association
Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish	Juliette Hatchman, South Western Fish Producers' Organisation
Andy Wheeler, Andy Wheeler Fisheries Consultancy Limited	Lewis Tattersall, Seafish
Aoife Martin, Seafish	Martyn Youell, Waterdance
Beshlie Pool, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association	Matt Johnson, Defra
Bill Brock, Brighton & Newhaven Fish Sales	Mike Roach, Holderness Fishing Industry Group
Brian Pawley, South Devon Fishers Ltd.	Paul Gilliland, MMO
Chloe North, Western FPO	Phil McBryde, Defra
Christopher Evans, Cefas	Phoebe Harris, Defra
Chris Ranford, CFPO	Rebecca Korda, Defra
Colin Bannister, SAGB	Rebecca Treacy, Seafish
David Jarrad, SAGB	Richard Hoskin, MMO
Ella Brock, Seafish	Robbie Fisher, Defra
Ewen Bell, Cefas	Sarah Clark, Devon and Severn IFCA
Hannah Edwins, Defra	Sophie Bennett, Defra
Helen Hunter, Defra	Tim Dixon, MMO
Holly Kaiser, Seafish	Trevor Bartlett, Devon Crab
Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association	
Joanna Messini, Defra	

Apologies

Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish	Jim Watson, Marine Scotland
Delyth Dyne, Defra	Richard Stride, South Devon & Channel Shellfishermen's Association

Actions and Minutes from August SIAG Meeting

The minutes were confirmed as an accurate representation of meeting discussions and the progress on the actions were summarised:

- a. The SIAG wrote to the Cruising Association to state that sustainable fisheries management is the SIAG's primary focus and that other, more appropriate, forums for engagement with the fishing industry on issues relating to entanglement exist.
- b. SIAG papers on data issues and ambitions and on marine spatial planning have been drafted by Seafish and are being reviewed internally before being shared with members.
- c. Work on cuttlefish is ongoing and as a result will be included on the agenda of the next SIAG meeting (expected to be in March 2022) at which point the JFS will have been published and there will be more clarity on the situation.

Shellfish Sentience & Welfare (Phoebe Harris, Defra)

1. The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill legally recognises that animals are sentient beings and ensures that this is taken into consideration in policy decisions. The purpose of the Bill is to create a committee to improve the policy decision making process and does not change existing legislation or existing business practices. The Animal Sentience Committee reviews how policy decisions consider animal welfare. The Committee cannot change legislation but can publish reports that ministers have a duty to respond to.

2. The Bill was introduced to the House of Lords in May and the third reading of the Bill (final stage in the House of Lords) took place on the 13th December. The Bill will then progress through the House of Commons (expected to occur in early January). Decapod crustaceans and cephalopod molluscs have been recognised as sentient beings and have been added to the Animal Welfare Bill.
3. The Committee has made it clear that whilst looking back at existing legislation regarding animal welfare may be helpful, retrospective review of existing legislation is not the best use of Committee time. Instead the Committee will be focused on informing the decision making process on future legislation. Trade issues are outside of the remit of the Committee.
4. London School of Economics' report on crustacea sentience and welfare (commissioned by Defra) was published in November and a presentation of the report occurred on the 7th December allowing stakeholders the opportunity to ask questions. The report can be found here: [Review of the evidence of sentience in Cephalopod molluscs and Decapod crustaceans, London School of Economics 2021.](#)
5. Comments from the group are summarised:
 - a. Some members debated the robustness of evidence presented in the report, such as the length of time taken for a lobster to die through the boiling method and requested clarification on these points. Further information on boiling/chilling can be found on page 74 of the LSE report: section 5.4 'Slaughter using extreme temperatures'.
 - b. The nature of scientific research means that reporting is skewed towards a positive result (i.e. crustaceans do display evidence of sentience, as opposed to reporting no evidence of sentience) meaning literature reviews are more likely to return positive results.
 - c. The LSE report lacks acknowledgement of the good practices that industry use and changes that have already been made to improve handling, welfare, and dispatch of crustaceans.
 - d. Members felt the recommendations presented in the LSE report were beyond its remit and could have severe ramifications on industry as they did not take into account current industry practices or economic concerns.

Rather than attempting to refute evidence presented on sentience, the best course of action is to progress work highlighting examples of best practice already occurring in the industry and to develop a set of codes/guidance that are fit for purpose. A collaborative initiative is currently being undertaken by the Crab Management Group, Shellfish Association of Great Britain, Seafish, and the shellfish sector to develop best practice guidance across the Cephalopod/Decapod supply chain. The aim of this work is to provide clarity on what best practice is, how this can be assured, and how the public are made aware of the sectors good credentials. Further updates on this work will be provided at following SIAG meetings.

Marine Spatial Planning (Paul Gilliland, MMO)

6. Paul Gilliland from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) presented an overview of the process and challenges of marine spatial planning.
7. Marine Planning is an important process given the increasing competition for use of marine space and resources. Its purpose is to ensure the right activities occur in the right place, time and way and is a public process which aims to achieve active stakeholder engagement. As of 2021, there are marine plans in place in all areas around the coast of England.
8. Evidence, government commitments and policy, and stakeholders all input to the marine spatial planning process. The output of the process is a marine spatial plan that can be viewed digitally via an online tool that allows users to explore the various aspects of a marine plan and to add in

their own data to the evidence base. The MMO encourage industry to use this tool to achieve a full understanding of what is included in a marine plan and how they can be used.

9. It can be difficult to recognise important fishing areas in the planning process as this information can be commercially sensitive. It was recognised that fishing is a dynamic system and that there is a need to take into account both where activity takes place at the moment as well as where it may take place in the future. However more prescriptive zoning of marine space can prove restrictive for all stakeholders.
10. Stakeholder engagement remains a challenge in the marine planning process, particularly with regard to understand patterns of fishing activity, and the MMO are open to ideas on how to improve engagement and understanding with the industry. Links for more information on marine planning are provided:
 - a. Marine Planning: [UK GOV Marine Planning](#)
 - b. Evidence Register: [Evidence and the MMO](#)
 - c. Explore Marine Plans: [Guidance: Explore Marine Plans](#)
11. Members from the SIAG provided comments and questions on the presentation and are summarised:
 - a. Co-existence between users of marine spatial plans was highlighted as being upheld by fishers over any other sector due to a necessity to co-exist or else risk going out of business. There is a need to address the perceived power imbalance to ensure that other sectors are willing to co-exist and that competing activities do not take precedence over fishing by default.
 - b. Whilst displacement is considered it was acknowledged that evidencing displacement is incredibly difficult. Diversification can be further limited by other legislation (e.g. MCZ designations).
 - c. There was a general feeling that engagement with the fishing industry is just a process and industry input is not taken as meaningful by some sectors involved during the application process. The MMO recommend fishers become more familiar with the plans in place in their local area as a means of engaging with applicants more effectively. Marine planning legislation states that new applicants must show evidence that they have avoided, minimised, or mitigated (in order of preference) their impact on existing users.
 - d. There is a need to better assess the cumulative effects of legislation and development on the fishing industry.
 - e. Incorporating the information gathered through iVMS was highlighted as a way of gathering evidence from the fishing industry without requiring too much engagement. The MMO could use this to fill gaps in evidence.

Fisheries Management Plans & the Joint Fisheries Statement (Robbie Fisher, Rebecca Korda, and Sophie Bennett, Defra)

12. The Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) is the UK-wide high level policy framework for the management of all fisheries. The JFS incorporates 8 strategic objectives which all Devolved Administrations (DAs) agree to adopt. Devolved powers of each DA are respected by the JFS but there is acknowledgement that none of the objectives can be achieved without UK-wide cooperation. The JFS will enter consultation in January 2022 for 12 weeks and will be finalised by autumn 2022. UK-wide information sessions will be held during the consultation.
13. Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) are a policy instrument that will shift fisheries management to a plan-led, coherent and cohesive management framework that provides an opportunity to work in partnership with industry. The Fisheries Act 2020 places a legal obligation on Defra to

produce FMPs, and these will be used to tackle environmental, social and economic issues faced by UK fisheries.

14. Defra have established a small number of projects called the “English Frontrunner FMPs” which will explore different methods of delivering draft plans. The SIAG have been crucial in influencing the selection of proposed FMPs for the frontrunner projects.
15. Comments from the group highlighted the good collaborative work with industry that has been undertaken so far in the start of the FMP process and the need for this to be maintained.
16. Seafish will provide an update on plans to organise workshops in the new year. These would be used to present draft FMPs to members to allow for a thorough review to be undertaken.
17. Seafish submitted two applications to the Fisheries Industry Science Partnership (FISP) fund. If successful, these applications will help progress some of the data gathering work highlighted as a priority by the Whelk Management Group and Crab & Lobster Management Group.

Crab Deaths in NE England (Matt Johnson, Defra & Christopher Evans, Cefas)

18. The Environment Agency (EA) received reports of dead or dying crab and lobster washed ashore in the Tees estuary in October. Since these initial reports, further reports have been received South of the Tees estuary. Cefas have undertaken a multitude of tests for an excessive variety of chemicals (including toxins, sewage, heavy metals). There is no clear conclusion on what has caused the deaths. There is currently no reason to believe that there is a public health concern for seafood caught in the area. Work continues to assess the impact of the event on the industry and stocks. A technical report will be released once the investigation has come to a close.
19. Members of the group were encouraged to contact the EA hotline on **0800 807060** if they have further information or would like to report further evidence.
 - a. Evidence highlighted at the meeting include anecdotal reports of dead crab, lobster and some white fish stuck in pots in the Dogger Bank. In the first week of December, there were also reports of dead shellfish species being found in North Wales. It is unclear if incidents are connected.

Update from the species management groups

Due to meeting time constraints no update on the species management groups was presented at this SIAG, instead notes are included below for member reference:

20. CMG (on behalf of Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish)

- a. Development of the crab and lobster FMP is ongoing via the CMG FMP working group, particularly around setting suitable species-specific objectives aligned with the Fisheries Act 2020.
- b. A Defra workshop on the WWER was held in October to discuss options around amending or replacing the legislation (which was rolled over into UK legislation on leaving the EU). Concerns were raised about representation on the workshop and it is likely that further round(s) of industry of industry engagement will be required.
- c. An update was provided on Defra’s call for evidence on latent capacity in the shellfish fleet, which was carried out in the summer. A summary of responses to Defra’s call for evidence will be posted on the government website once they are available.
- d. A Fishing Industry Science Partnership application has been submitted to fund expansion of the geographic and spatial coverage of on-board autonomous sampling

unit technology for the collection of crab and lobster catch composition data. Dr Natalie Hold provided an overview of this project at the last CMG and a number of members registered their interest in contributing to the study. Application outcome notification is expected in January 2022 and the CMG will update the SIAG accordingly.

21. WMG (on behalf of Aoife Martin, Seafish)

- a. Development of the whelk FMP is ongoing via the WMG FMP working group.
- b. Initial findings of the whelk anecdotal data gathering survey (carried out on behalf of the WMG by Heriot-Watt University, Bangor University, and Cefas) show potential for improved assessment of the impact of environmental factors on determining stock boundaries. Data analysis is ongoing. It is possible the survey will be revisited to gather more data from other areas of the UK.
- c. An initial discussion session was held on options around managing whelk fishing effort, however this work is ongoing.
- d. A Fishing Industry Science Partnership application has been submitted to fund trials of a) whelk bait alternatives, b) whelk pot selectivity devices (to remove undersize whelks), and c) data gathering using autonomous sampling units and AI technology. Application outcome notification is expected in January 2022 and the WMG will update the SIAG accordingly.

Actions

Action no.	Action	Responsibility
8.1	Follow up with LSE team on questions from SIAG members on the crustacea welfare report and circulate appropriate references.	Seafish
8.2	Defra to circulate more information on the scope and remit of the Animal Sentience Committee as established through the Animal Welfare Bill.	Defra/Seafish
8.3	Add an agenda item to the next SIAG to provide an update on the SAGB/CMG/Seafish guidance on crustacean handling and welfare across the supply chain.	Seafish
8.4	Pass information on the Whitecross/Erebus sites to MMO planning and outline key issues from a fisher point of view	Seafish (MMO)
8.5	Circulate JFS consultation information to SIAG/CMG/WMG members (January 2022).	Seafish (Defra)