

Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) Meeting

11 August 2021

Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Barrie Deas, NFFO (Chair)	Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association
Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish	Jim Portus, South Western Fish Producers Organisation
Andrew Rooney, Rooney Fish	Joanna Messini, Defra
Alison Freeman	John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association
Andy Wheeler, Andy Wheeler Fisheries Consultancy Limited	Martyn Youell, Waterdance
Aoife Martin, Seafish	Mike Roach, Holderness Fishing Industry Group
Beshlie Pool, South Devon and Channel Shellfishermen's Association	Patrick Smith, DAERA
Chloe North, Western FPO	Paul Brown, Brown & Bright Shellfish Ltd.
Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish	Phil McBryde, Defra
Colin Bannister, SAGB	Sarah Clark, Devon and Severn IFCA
Ella Brock, Seafish	Sarah Horsfall, SWFPO
Holly Kaiser, Seafish	

Apologies

Helen Hunter, Defra
Matt Johnson, Defra
Richard Hoskin, MMO
Femke de Boer, SWFPA

General update: Entanglement issues

1. A sub-group of SIAG members previously met with the Cruising Association to discuss the issue of entanglement and marking of static gear. Since that meeting desk-based research has been carried out and a meeting was held with the RNLI to determine the scale of the issue and relevance for the SIAG. The SIAG acknowledge that entanglement with fishing gear is an issue but that this may be a more significant problem with recreational fishing gears rather than commercial fishing gears, and as such is outside of the SIAG's remit.
2. It was agreed by members that this is a lower priority issue for the SIAG and that resources would be better used to develop and progress fishery management plans. The fishing industry will remain engaged with the topic via the NFFO which is part of the Fishing Industry Safety Group. The SIAG Chair will write to the Cruising Association to inform them of the SIAG's stance on gear entanglement and forums for further engagement with the industry.

Development of the National Shellfish Fisheries Plan (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

3. Work on the draft National Shellfish Fisheries Plan (NSFP) and species-specific chapters is ongoing. A working group has been set up to progress focused work on the NSFP. Membership of the group consists of a small sub-set of members from the SIAG. The group will meet every 2-3 months with the purpose of steering development of the plan and to review drafts before the plan is presented to the SIAG.
4. To date, the group has developed a set of high-level overarching objectives that will form the NSFP plan. The next stage is for the group to unpick the specific activities involved in delivering each objective.
5. The crab and lobster chapter and the whelk chapter have similar working groups with the same purpose. Each species-specific chapter will include species-specific objectives

focussing on stock research and management, environmental impacts of fishing the specific species and socio-economic factors that relate to the species' fisheries.

Data issues and overarching data collection principles for shellfish

6. Current data gathering efforts are focused primarily on monitoring compliance with legislation, as opposed to gathering data to support evidence-based decision making and management. There are regional variations in the type and quality of data collected, meaning that data assets are often incompatible. Issues have been raised in both science sub-groups of the WMG and CMG and have been identified as applicable to all shellfish species. Thus, given the ambition of the NSFP to improve the management of UK shellfish fisheries, problems with data collection will be addressed by the SIAG.
7. The SIAG are aware that acquiring fishers' full participation in data collection can be challenging. It is important to strongly communicate to fishers the importance of their contribution and the benefits of providing the data required for the effective management of their fisheries. SIAG members acknowledged that processors also collect data and can contribute to create a broader picture of the status of shellfish stocks.
8. Seafish will draft a paper outlining the intended actions the group would like to see undertaken to collect data that are fit for management purposes. The paper will acknowledge the usefulness of existing data, how current data collection mechanisms could be tweaked to provide better outputs, how seafood processors could contribute to data provision, and will set out the expectations of the objective. The paper will be circulated to all SIAG members for comment.

Crab Management Group update (Claire Pescod, Macduff Shellfish)

9. The last CMG meeting was held on 22nd July and the key discussion points are summarised:
 - a. There will be a workshop(s) to discuss alternatives to the Western Waters Effort Regime (WWER) in October. This will require significant input from industry as any changes to the WWER will have implications for all stakeholders. Invitees will include all CMG members, the SAGB crustacean committee, the MMO WWER working group, Devolved Administration fishery managers and the MSC facilitated Project UK FIP crab and lobster steering group. If members of the SIAG have further suggestions to add to the invite list, please get in touch with Claire Pescod.
 - b. The first CMG working group meeting will be held on the 17th August to begin development of the crab and lobster chapter of the NSFP.
 - c. Meetings are being held with Defra, the MMO and industry on the management of Non-Quota Stocks (NQS) and the implications it has on industry. Claire Pescod represents the CMG at these meetings.
 - d. The last science sub-group meeting was held at the beginning of July and prioritised the objectives of the research plan. The group also discussed the spatially dynamic stock assessment model for crab and lobster which Cefas are currently developing to replace the current model.

Whelk Management Group update (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

10. The last WMG meeting was held on 4th August and the key discussion points are summarised:
 - a. There was agreement on the need to implement management measures on the UK whelk fishery to stabilise fishing effort. The whelk fishery is currently open access, meaning any fisher with a valid license can prosecute the fishery. This is

an incredibly complex topic and will be brought back to the WMG for further discussion at the next meeting.

- b. The 'managing whelk fishing effort' discussion paper will be circulated with the SIAG, the WMG, the IFCA stakeholder groups and the Regional Fisheries Groups for further comment.
- c. The WMG have been invited as observers onto the North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC). Whilst there is interest in collaborating with EU colleagues on the management of English Channel whelk fisheries, negotiations are ongoing, meaning all UK-EU discussions must be delivered via the Specialised Committee on Fisheries. The WMG will write a letter to the NWWAC stating the WMG's position.
- d. The use of soft brown crab for whelk bait was discussed and was not perceived to be an issue in the regions represented at this WMG meeting. However, Seafish will look into this issue further and update the group accordingly.

Scallop Industry Consultation Group update (Jim Portus, SWFPO)

11. The last Scallop Industry Consultation Group (SICG) meeting was held on 16th June and key discussion points are summarised:
 - a. The group had discussions setting the western waters effort limits for the coming quarter.
 - b. There is a short call for evidence about the 7d East Channel closed season. This follows work done in 2019 by the SICG which tabled a number of management proposals for the scallop fishery which were considered essential if sustainable management is to be achieved.
 - c. The scallop sector is likely to be impacted by the TCA in relation to tonnage limits applied to NQS, however Defra has confirmed that catches will be monitored in 2021 and tonnage limits will not be applied (potentially leading to the closure of the fishery in late 2021).

Defra calls for evidence

12. There are currently two live Defra calls for evidence of relevance to the shellfish sector:
 - a. Management of the under 15m scallop fleet; and
 - b. Latent capacity (unused licenses and entitlements) in the over 10m scallop and shellfish fleets in England.
13. All responses to the Call for Evidence are required by the **30th August 2021** and all members of the SIAG are urged to respond where relevant. More information on the call for evidence, including instructions on how to respond, can be found here: [Latent capacity in the over 10m scallop and shellfish fleet](#).

Shellfish sentience and welfare

14. Members of the SIAG were informed by Defra that some stakeholders have reported receiving a fake letter, purporting to be from Defra, regarding the welfare, storage, selling, and dispatch of crustaceans. This letter is fake, has not been sent from Defra, and does not reflect government policy. The fake letter specifically advertises the use of an appliance which claims to kill crustaceans without suffering. The letter in question is dated 15 June 2021, appears to be from the Secretary of State for Environment, and carries a copy of the Defra letterhead. Members are asked to report the letter to Defra if they receive it.
15. The Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill was introduced to the House of Lords in May 2021. Improving animal welfare standards is a government manifesto commitment so there is an expectation that the Bill will be passed. The Bill will provide legal recognition that animals are sentient beings and will establish a committee to review policy relating to animal welfare; the Bill will not change existing laws, policies, or practices.

16. There is a report being undertaken by the London School of Economics to research whether crustacea are sentient which will be published in the near future. Seafish is finalising a report identifying where good practice already exists in industry and where improvements could be made regarding the handling of crustacea.
17. The SIAG will act as a forum for any future developments of the Sentience Bill or related issues.

Access to marine space

18. Marine spatial squeeze and loss of fishing grounds is a known challenge for UK shellfish fisheries. This includes competition for marine space with conservation goals (MPA/MCZ/HPMAs), offshore renewable energy development, and recreation. The SIAG has a role to voice the concerns industry has regarding displacement and will develop an approach to address this.
19. The group will invite an MMO officer to the next meeting to discuss this issue in depth.

Actions

Action no.	Action	Responsibility
7.1	Write to the Cruising Association regarding the SIAG's stance on entanglement issues and means of further engagement with the fishing sector.	Barrie Deas
7.2	Draft a paper on data issues outlining SIAG expectations and ambitions for data gathering, analysis, communication, and inclusion in the management decision making process.	Seafish
7.3	Draft a paper on marine spatial planning and access to fishing grounds relevant to the shellfish industry.	Seafish
7.4	Circulate information to SIAG/CMG members regarding the fake 'Defra' letter on crustacean welfare	Seafish
7.5	Add a discussion on cuttlefish to the agenda for the next SIAG meeting.	Seafish/Defra