

## Aquaculture Leadership Group Meeting Minutes – 8 December 2021

### In Attendance

James Fox Davies, Fowey Shellfish Co, ALG Chair	Roger Covey, Natural England
Kim Cullen, SF2040	Martin Sutcliffe, Dorset Coast Forum
Fern Skeldon, MMO	Kelsey Thompson, Morecambe Bay Oysters
Dr Stuart McLanaghan, Seafish	Ruth Allin, Defra
Martin Syvret, AquaFish Solutions	John Holmyard, Offshore Shellfish
Dr Lewis Le Vay, Bangor University	Chris Evans, CEFAS
Ben Coppin, MMO	David Jarrad, Shellfish Association of GB
Rob Whiteley, Natural England	Dr Chris Sweeting, MMO
Elena Piana, Noola Redclaw	

### Guests

Dr Neil Auchterlonie, SF2040	Dustin Benton, Green Alliance
Dr Angus Garrett, Seafish	James Elliot, Green Alliance

### Apologies

Angela Mead, Biome Algae	Oliver Robinson, British Trout Association
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## Meeting Minutes

### Agenda #1

#### Welcome, James Fox Davies, ALG Chair

- The Chair welcomed guests and noted the apologies
- The minutes from the October 2021 meeting were approved via email

### Agenda #2

#### Seafish update, Dr Stuart McLanaghan (*paper emailed to ALG*)

- EU Exit
  - Seafish continues to work with UK governments, regulators and industry stakeholders, to support the sector to adjust to the changed operating environment. For aquaculture, the focus remains on providing information, resources and expertise, to input to discussions to help improve shellfish and LBM export issues. We have been working closely with Defra and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, to navigate new live bivalve inspection and certification requirements.
  - Seafish presented on this Export Health Certification issue at the recent SAGB Mollusc Committee meeting.
  - [UK Exit from the EU](#) page and resources keep industry up to date
- Official Controls Regulation (OCR) / DASSHH Project
  - The proposals outlined in the [Seafish OCR report](#) have been prioritised by the Shellfish Stakeholder Working Group. Any changes made to the way in which the OCR are implemented

must take both domestic and export markets into account and remain aligned with the EU requirements. FSA, Cefas, Bangor University and Seafish are continuing to work on implementing these proposals. Local Authority and industry expertise and experience are critical to the successful implementation of any change, and separate meetings have been held with each to identify key needs and barriers to implementation.

- Scientific aspects of the Developing an Assurance Scheme for Shellfish and Human Health ([DASSHH](#)) Project were discussed on 7 Dec with SSWG. Thereafter, the findings will be considered as part of wider risk-based management approaches for shellfish production.
- Quarterly Supply Chain Reviews
  - Initially created at the beginning of 2020, our [quarterly Covid / supply chain updates](#) are moving to a online dashboard. This new Tableau tool will provide both quantitative data and narrative for each of the nine key areas of the supply chain, as previously covered in the standalone reports. Launch of this new resource, is likely to be early 2022, and will contain not only up to date intelligence, but information going back over 2020; enabling users to explore changes over time.
- End-of-Life (EOL) Gear Workshop
  - The British-Irish Council administrations (including the UK's four DAs) have committed to work with industry to develop solutions for the collection / recycling of EOL gear and equipment from main fishing ports. Outputs from two EOL gear workshops held in late November (one on fishing gear, the other aquaculture equipment<sup>2</sup>) will be available next year.

### Discussion

- The ALG members who are also on SSWG can present at the 9 Feb 2022 meeting on the DASSHH research results but first need to check with Seafish.
- Shellfish industry, local authorities, and Seafish are keen to move some of the OCR recommendations forward, but industry notes concern that FSA and CEFAS are moving slowly. There are however steps underway to improve that process.
- Concern remains about the direction of Pacific Oysters for industry. Natural England continue to work on the mitigation strategy as eradication is not possible.

### Agenda #3

#### **Defra update, Ruth Allin**

- RA discussed how the Defra family is supporting the English Aquaculture Strategy critical actions
  - Knowledge, Innovation & Technology
    - 1: Development of a research sub-strategy
      - CEFAS has provided input
    - 2 & 3: Provide funding for an English Aquaculture Innovation Hub and Establish an English Aquaculture Innovation Hub
      - MMO FaSS provided funding for the development project
  - Financial Support
    - 1: Public funding of English aquaculture is reassessed in line with the aspirations set out in this Strategy

- 2: Based on the recommendations in FS 1, the replacement for the European Fisheries and Maritime Fund and its successor public funding programmes should align with this funding sub-strategy
- Defra comments on Financial Support critical actions: The MMO FaSS scheme is live and there was a specific Live Bivalve Mollusc scheme. Work is underway to look at the criteria for the next round. Industry were involved in that consultation. Also, there is a £100 million fund also available for aquaculture.
- Governance & Regulation
  - 1: A clear policy for English aquaculture development is prepared within the framework of the Fisheries Bill, the Common Fisheries Policy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, and the wider policy environment
    - The Joint Fisheries Statement is being drafted, it will include aquaculture at a high level, and there will be a public consultation.
    - There is a link between research and policy particularly around the eco-system benefits that aquaculture can offer. Defra are interested in understanding the quantification of those benefits (more concrete evidence is necessary so that it can feed into policy making decisions).
  - 2: Following completion of Defra's review of aquaculture regulations, implement the agreed approach for transparent, streamlined, and proportionate regulation
    - Defra are aware of the shellfish industry's frustrations that the shellfish regulatory framework has been temporarily halted.
    - RA invites shellfish ALG members to contact her for a virtual meeting in January 2022 to further discuss the temporary halting of shellfish regulatory framework review. This is an opportunity to discuss what it is that the industry wants from that review and what the Defra family can provide.
  - 3: Develop a regional approach to aquaculture development, management, and regulation, creating regional hubs.
    - No specific actions for the Defra family at this point in time.
- Human Capacity & Development
  - 1: Develop a training needs analysis for human capacity development for English aquaculture up to 2040
    - The £100 million fund will have a Training & Skills pillar (scheme).
    - RA invites feedback from ALG members to email her with any comments on the direction of travel for that pillar.
- Subsectors: Shellfish
  - 1: Finalise a formal policy for the use of Pacific oysters in English waters balancing the potential harm from further farmed introductions with the socio-economic benefits of producing this now established species.
    - This remains a contentious issue. Defra attended the SAGB Mollusc Committee meeting in November and are in regular contact with SAGB.

- 2: Develop the risk-based approach to the classification of shellfish production waters that ensures food safety for consumers but provides increased assurance and certainty to shellfish farmers, investors, and markets.
- Subsectors: Macroalgae
  - 1: Development of specific marine licensing guidelines for macroalgae culture that reflects its nature, scale and impact of these extractive, low trophic species
    - Dr Elisa Capuzzo, CEFAS, is developing the guidance document, and is sharing that with MMO and Natural England. She will also engage with industry to ensure the guidance is of value to industry.

## Discussion

- Agreement that Defra's aquaculture evidence strategy will align with the research strategy; there will be overlaps.
- ALG industry and Secretariat members' comments on Financial Support:
  - Time limited competitive funds are not always the right type of funding for certain seafood industry organisations and programmes. There needs to be multi-year capability. Industry and the SF2040 Secretariat have fed these comments back to FaSS via the public consultation.
  - It is disappointing that the minimum project spend is £1 million for the infrastructure pillar of the £100 million seafood fund. This rules out the majority of the smaller scale operations. There is value for money looking at smaller infrastructure projects as well.
  - Defra comment: FaSS can help with smaller infrastructure projects. In regard to multi-year funding availability, there is a wide understanding of the need to provide grants beyond 10 months.
- Martin Sutcliffe is working with Seafish and local partners in Dorset to develop an aquaculture apprentice standard for England. It is a long road and they are at the very beginning but it directly aligns with Human Capacity & Development critical action #1.

## Actions

1. RA will take ALG feedback on the funding to MMO.
2. Shellfish ALG members are invited to contact RA for a virtual meeting in Jan 2022 to discuss the temporary halt of the shellfish regulatory framework review.

## Agenda #4

### **Regional Update: Dorset Coast Forum (DCF), Martin Sutcliffe**

- The development of an English Aquaculture Innovation Hub continues
  - Four workstreams
    - Economic impact assessment led by New Economic Foundation
    - Business plan/model led by Hatch Blue
    - Review of 5G technology capability to enhance aquaculture production by 5G Rural Dorset
    - Stakeholder engagement and dissemination by DCF
    - All workstreams will feed into the Options Paper for Phase 2

- DCF released a survey looking for feedback on what English aquaculture industry wants from the Hub and what its functions would be. A good representation across England has responded and DCF is confident of its findings are a result. Next steps are 1-to-1 meetings with industry and ALG industry members are encouraged to email MS.
- This is not a Dorset-centric aquaculture innovation hub but a national one.

## Actions

1. All industry ALG members are invited to contact MS for a 1-to-1 meeting to discuss the English Aquaculture Innovation Hub.

## Agenda #5

### **SF0240 Secretariat Update, Kim Cullen**

- FaSS funding expires 28 Feb
  - Next FaSS round estimated to open in April
  - FaSS application underway for next round
- SILG meeting with Minister Prentis in January
  - James represents aquaculture on the SILG so ALG members are encouraged to contact him with concerns and good news to raise with Minister
- Defra White Paper on National Food Strategy (NFS)
  - Seafish Executive team and SF2040 Secretariat are working with Defra to ensure the seafood narrative is embedded in the NFS
- Rec 13 research
  - There is an underspend in the SF2040 budget due to reduced travel because of COVID, therefore the SF2040 Secretariat asked MMO-FaSS for a re-allocation of funds to pay for research to map out the English seafood supply chain and conduct a gaps analysis to identify the problems. SF2040 ALG will be part of the stakeholder engagement
- Rec 5 workshop
  - A SILG and ALG workshop has been organized to discuss Rec 5 (environmental performance of catching, aquaculture and processing sectors)

## Discussion

- Several ALG members thanked Kim for her work on the programme and wished her well in her new role.
- As the funding for the programme expires on 28 Feb, Seafish cannot currently recruit for a new Programme Manager until further funding is secured.
- The next ALG meeting scheduled for 9 Feb will go ahead and be online only. Seafish Regional Manager, Phillip Quirie, will support James with the Secretariat work and will be in touch via email with the ALG members.

## **Agenda #6 – CANCELED DUE TO ILLNESS**

### **Highlight on industry: Angela Mead, Biome Algae Ltd**

### Agenda #7

#### **Climate change and aquaculture – a challenge and opportunity, Dr Angus Garrett, Seafish** (*presentation emailed to ALG*)

- Climate change – a strategic challenge
  - GHG emissions contributing to global climate change: a major challenge for the world
  - Action needed by government, industry, and wider society
  - This challenge is being considered globally, nationally and at a local level (e.g. UK net-zero commitments, UK Climate adaptation reporting, and UK Fisheries Act)
  - Climate change interlinked with other global challenges (e.g. food security)
- Climate change – an opportunity
  - Climate/food trade-offs: climate change and feeding the world
  - Seafood a relatively low emissions protein
  - Making seafood a climate smart food choice
  - To take advantage of this opportunity: Put climate change in context; Adapt to these changes; Demonstrate carbon credentials
- Climate impacts on aquaculture – adaptation
  - Drivers relevant to aqua seafood chains:
    - Increased storminess and waves (now)
    - Air or water temperature change (now)
    - Changes in terrestrial rainfall / run off (by 2040)
    - Sea level rise and extreme water levels (by 2070)
    - Ocean acidification and deoxygenation (by 2070) ...and for feed...
    - El Nino frequency / severity
- Aquaculture impacts on climate – mitigation
  - Not all emissions are equal – there are key ‘hotspots’ in seafood carbon footprints
  - Although seafood is a climate smart food choice...seafood carbon footprints can be further reduced by addressing carbon ‘hotspots’
- Supporting response
  - Seafish support in the long-term is focused on:
    - Overcoming the challenges around climate change adaptation and mitigation
    - Ensuring the industry can contribute to net-zero targets while continuing to operate sustainably and profitably. To do this we will:
      - Produce information and guidance for businesses on the impact of Climate Change and what they need to do to respond
      - Develop practical tools e.g. seafood emissions profiling tool for fishing and aquaculture

### Discussion

- Aquaculture has an important message but also we need to be mindful of the scale of the climate change problem. A third of UK carbon emissions come from the food supply chain. English aquaculture’s contribution to reducing the UK’s carbon footprint must then be massive. And the

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flipside is that people need to eat more seafood. If we want to use aquaculture as a step change in reducing carbon emissions, we shouldn't shy away from it, but it is a massive scale change.

- We need to push through the false headlines and propaganda / myths to ensure the message about seafood's ability to reduce the carbon footprint to come through more. The opportunity is to move seafood from the periphery to the central thrust of the conversation.
- There is a plan to include aquaculture in the Seafish carbon emissions tool.

### **Agenda #8**

**Food from the sea in a zero-carbon world, Dustin Benton, [Green Alliance](#)** (*presentation NOT YET emailed to ALG as presenter is now on paternity leave*)

- The goal is to keep warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is a tough goal that will take effort across all sectors.
- Fish trawling is a concern and research shows it can be quite high in emissions. A shift to aquaculture would reduce UK marine GHG emissions.
- Green Alliance's initial view of aquaculture and what it can do:
  - RAS: The sustainability factor is positive – needs renewable energy, plant-based feed, and animal welfare risks to be addressed.
  - Bivalve aquaculture: Sustainability factor is high.
  - Seaweed as a biomass feed stock: Sustainability factor is high if well farmed; poor if dredged

### **Agenda #9**

#### **AOB / Next steps**

- Next ALG meeting will be online 9 Feb. ALG advised to keep an eye out for the meeting invite from Phillip Quirie, interim Secretariat.