

Shellfish Industry Advisory Group (SIAG) Meeting

4th May 2022

Remote meeting via Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Barrie Deas, NFFO (Chair)

Andrew Brown, Macduff Shellfish

Andrew Rooney, Rooney Fish

Aoife Martin, Seafish

Bill Brock, Brighton & Newhaven Fish Sales

Chris Ranford, CFPO

Colin Bannister, SAGB

Damian Chapman

Ella Brock, Seafish

Helen Lovell, Fishermen's mission

Helen Hunter, Defra

Jim Evans, Welsh Fishermen's Association

John Balls, North Devon Fishermen's Association

Juliette Hatchman, Southwestern Fish Producers' Organisation

Evan Kelly, Defra

Lewis Tattersall, Seafish

Mike Roach, Holderness Fishing Industry Group

Patrick Smith, DAERA

Mike Cohen, NFFO

Andrea O' Shaughnessy

Rebecca Treacy, Seafish

Sarah Clark, Devon and Severn IFCA

Trevor Bartlett, Devon Crab

Apologies

Andy Wheeler

Chloe North

Claire Pescod

Paul Brown

Jim Watson

Richard Hoskin

Annabel Stockwin

Matt Johnson

Actions and Minutes from December SIAG Meeting

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

- a. Appropriate resources regarding the LSE crustacea welfare report were circulated amongst group members.
- b. An item has been added to the agenda of this meeting regarding SAGB guidance on crustacean handling.
- c. Discussions have been held between the industry and MMO on spatial planning issues within Whitecross/Erebus sites.
- d. Members have been made aware of the JFS consultation process via email updates.

Update from members on key issues of interest to the SIAG

1. At the recent Barcelona seafood expo, it was noted that there was concern amongst European delegates regarding a potential ban on bottom trawling. Members raised concerns that if a motion to ban bottom trawling is gaining traction in the EU then it may gain traction in the UK, the SIAG should therefore remain alert to this issue. Questions around how a ban on bottom trawling could affect shellfish fisheries e.g. displacement of effort, fishers seeking alternative income etc., and how this could influence fisheries management.
2. Concerns raised regarding market driven changes in the fleet, specifically around market demand outweighing supply for some shellfish species. A consultation will take place in

Scotland in June regarding a proposal to freeze fishing effort within the 3 nautical mile zone which will impact parts the shellfish sector.

3. There has been a recent focus on ethics and welfare issues within UK fisheries; with results of a study conducted by the University of Nottingham expected to be published in May. It is expected that this report will attract media attention, and that there may be some aspects which will not be well received by industry. The Fishermans Welfare Alliance are looking to put together a related press release, and will work together with the team recently contracted by Waitrose (to undertake a survey of ethics and welfare issues) to produce a series of 'induction videos' for non-UK crew.

Management of crawfish/spiny lobster (Andrea O'Shaughnessy, MMO)

4. Currently, MLS varies across UK crawfish fisheries, for example retained UK law states an MLS of 95 mm, whereas an MLS of 110 mm is stated within other legislation e.g. Cornwall and Devon & Severn IFCA byelaws. It would make more sense from a biological and fisheries management perspective to review such legislation with the aim of implementing one consistent MLS across UK and foreign fleets. An SI will be required to implement this.
5. Members were invited to provide thoughts on a proposed voluntary approach to compliance with a consistent MLS during the consultation period. Comments from the group are summarised below:
 - a. Fishers landing crawfish tend to support a harmonised MLS, and a national MLS increase to 110 mm.
 - b. Implementation of a voluntary approach might be good for marketing of the fishery and PR.
 - c. Implementation of a voluntary approach should not slow down the progression of a legal framework.
 - d. Concerns raised surrounding the possibility that any voluntary measures applied before legislation could be detrimental to UK fleet, i.e. place them at a disadvantage compared to non-UK vessels.
6. Group members were reminded that crawfish sits under the brown crab & lobster FMP, therefore further discussions on this issue will be delivered via the CMG.

SIAG shellfish FMP development (Lewis Tattersall, Seafish)

7. The group was presented with an update on the overarching shellfish FMP work, which is being progressed by a working group of the SIAG. A set of overarching objectives are being developed which are applicable to all shellfish FMPs, and focus on issues relevant to all shellfish fisheries. These are being referred to as 'common objectives' which will be copied as standard across front running species-specific shellfish FMPs.
8. Examples of common shellfish objectives were presented to the group. Two objectives: (1) *Establishing an improved information base with which to manage shellfish fisheries*, and (2) *Assessing environmental interactions*, have been deemed more appropriate for inclusion in species-specific plans than the overarching shellfish plan.
9. Next steps are as follows:
 - a. Seafish team are currently making updates based on feedback provided at the last working group meeting (14th April).
 - b. Reviewing objectives with the species-specific groups to ensure consistency, with the aim of reviewing with the wider SIAG shortly.
10. Comments from group members are summarised below:

- a. It was questioned to what extent this work has been shared with Marine Scotland and the other DAs, and whether Marine Scotland are considering signing up to the common shellfish objectives. This issue has been raised across various shellfish FMP working groups and will be addressed via further engagement with the DAs.
- b. Questions around how FMP objectives will be prioritised in order to ensure appropriate use of time and resources. These objectives will be presented to the SIAG for review as part of the FMP development process, and at this point members will be invited to comment on how they could be prioritised.
- c. Recognition that FMP development is process heavy, and in order to highlight tangible benefits it should be ensured that during the consultation process, stakeholders are consulted on a package of possible management interventions. It was also recognised that the groups should retain insight into this FMP process.
- d. This 'package of possible management interventions' should remain sensitive to the fact that shellfish fisheries face a dynamic suite of issues e.g. recent increases in fuel prices have led some fishers to increase the number of pots they fish. However, this will need to be delivered within the bounds of practicalities of making interventions.
- e. FMP objectives should be considered together rather than in isolation in order to efficiently deliver effective stock management i.e. if there is market demand and a stock is deemed to be sustainable then latency may be less of an issue.

Update on Specialised Committee for Fisheries and multi annual strategies for NQS (Evan Kelly, Defra)

11. It has been challenging to meet the deadline for this year's annual NQS MYS consultations due to issues with data exchange and transparency. Progress has been achieved via the NQS working group, and the minutes of the most recent meeting (30/03/2022) will soon be published on gov.uk.
12. There is a need for rapid progress on development of MYS, utilising existing science and evidence rather than waiting for an unrealistic 'gold standard'. Defra are developing a paper outlining existing science, evidence, and management measures, and a similar exercise being undertaken by European counterparts. A species led-approach is preferred, and prioritisation criteria (e.g. socio-economic, biological, environmental factors) have been agreed and will be incorporated in aforementioned paper.
13. Issues with data exchange have been highlighted to the commission, however the commission preferred that this should be addressed separately to the development of MYS, at the point of cross-checking discrepancies within the datasets.
14. The commission has flagged that there is a need to manage and develop linkages between the FMP process and MYS. Group members also questioned how FMPs which apply to all vessels fishing within UK waters will align with MYS, and expressed concerns regarding the transparency with which data will be provided by the EU. This is high on the agenda for Defra, who are developing a timetable for progress on MYS and data related issues, and progressing discussions around the evidence framework and underlying principles.

SIAG data ambition (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

15. Inadequacies regarding the fisheries dependent data collection process has been identified as a common issue across shellfish fisheries, therefore any actions addressing this topic will be delivered via the SIAG as part of the FMP development process. It was acknowledged that this wider issue is related to UK fisheries management, not only shellfish.
16. A briefing paper has been produced which summarises five key issues in the following areas:

- a. Data collection currently focuses on compliance over fisheries management purposes and there is a general lack of good quality effort data for shellfish fisheries.
 - b. Inconsistency between mechanisms and métiers across fleets means that it is difficult to get optimum value from datasets.
 - c. Duplication of effort across the data collection process.
 - d. Regional variation in data quality.
 - e. A number of issues with the usability of, and data collected by, the MMO catch app.
17. It is essential to ensure that the appropriate data is being collected in order to support robust evidence-based fisheries management. Data should be accessible for both research and management purposes.
 18. Seafish will plan and run a workshop in mid-June engaging representatives from Defra, Cefas, the MMO, and the association of IFCA's with the overall aim of developing and implementing a national plan for data collection. Key actions will be identified and prioritised, and a strategic paper will be prepared for the Defra Ocean Board, which will form the basis of an action to develop a strategic proposal for approval and budgeting. Throughout this project, regular progress updates will be delivered via the SIAG.
 19. Group members questioned whether there would be scope within this project to push for an increase in fisheries independent data collection for shellfish fisheries. However, it was deemed most appropriate to keep fisheries dependent data as the focus of this project, and address fisheries independent data separately.
 20. Acknowledgement that ensuring industry buy-in will be key to the success of this project.

Competition for marine space (Open discussion)

21. Following the NFFO paper on effort displacement published ~12 months ago, group members questioned what work is going on within the MMO and Defra to understand this issue, considering that the threat of displacement has intensified with the announcement of plans to expand offshore wind developments. This is a high level issue spanning multiple government departments, and will need to be addressed at the policy level.
22. It was highlighted that Cefas have previously run a project to model the effects of spatial displacement and relocation of fishing activity.
23. The issue of effort displacement is intrinsically linked to the success of the FMP process, as FMPs will aim to manage a fishery where it is now. This is referenced in the JFS but more substance is needed. FMPs should be mindful not to create displacement issues in themselves, and Defra will need to take a comprehensive look into the displacement effect.
24. The legal standing for a fishery's interest in an area will be key. It was questioned whether fish and shellfish be recognised in terms of food security to give fisheries more of a seat at the table in discussions around marine spatial planning. As fishing is currently only recognised as a 'soft constraint' when considering where a wind farm can be located, it will be necessary to get fishing into the 'hard constraint' category to ensure legal protection.
25. Work is nearing completion on an ABPmer study of cumulative impacts of spatial squeeze commissioned by the NFFO and SFF. Outputs will form the basis for representations to government regarding the issue of displacement. A focus will be placed on the fact that it will now be necessary to identify areas of the seabed that are essential for food security.
26. The group acknowledged that whilst there is often a false assumption that fishing can always move elsewhere, there is now growing recognition within parts of government that the expansion of offshore wind and nature conservancy (e.g. the exclusion of all fishing activity within HPMA's) is creating an unprecedented situation for fisheries.

27. There will be a need to evidence where fishing activity is taking place. This could be achieved via the roll out of iVMS.

Species management group updates:

Crab & Lobster Management Group (Lewis Tattersall, Seafish)

28. The following is a summary of key updates provided at the most recent CMG:
 - a. Defra update on NQS management via the TCA
 - b. Future updates to the WWER will be incorporated into CMGs FMP work
 - c. Daera update on new management measures in NI
 - d. Update on the CMGs response to issues around crustacean welfare and the Sentience Bill
 - e. Cefas update on new crab disease discovered in south coast fisheries
 - f. Progress is ongoing regarding the drafting of FMPs and research plans for crab and lobster
 - g. FISP funding secured for project led by researchers at Bangor University to expand use artificial intelligence technology to gather catch composition data

Whelk Management Group (Aoife Martin, Seafish)

29. The following is a summary of key updates provided at the most recent WMG:
 - a. Defra update on NQS management via the TCA.
 - b. Progress is ongoing regarding the drafting of whelk FMPs and research plans.
 - c. FISP funding secured for project led by researchers at Heriot Watt University to investigate stock structure, bait alternatives, and the utility of artificial intelligence technology for gathering catch composition data.
 - d. The in-person whelk effort management workshop held in March was well received. Seafish are producing a workshop summary report which will include management proposals.
30. Suggestion that there might be a need for a dedicated TCA related group sitting between SIAG and FIAG.
31. Discussions held around whelk market conditions.

SICG (Jim Portus, SICG chair)

32. The SICG working group (WG) has recently been commissioned by Defra as delivery lead for the king scallop FMP, and draft FMP objectives have been developed by a writing sub-group and provided to the full SICG WG for review. High level objectives are to be discussed further at the next SICG WG meeting towards the end of May (27/05). Discussions are ongoing regarding on work package completion, including timelines and responsibilities.
33. The group has engaged with Natural England during the early drafting stages to develop ecosystem objectives.
34. Seafish are producing a stakeholder engagement plan for shellfish FMPs, which will cover king scallops.
35. Defra have confirmed that they will fund the Cefas stock assessments for 2022, but there is uncertainty over future funding.

36. Concerns raised regarding delays in provisioning of data for non-UK fishing activity in UK waters.

Shellfish sentience and welfare (Mike Roach, HFIG)

37. As of the 28th of April the Sentience Bill has received royal ascent, and it is now the Animal Sentience Act. A dedicated Animal Sentience Committee will hence be formed.
38. There is a sense that industry must take action to get in front of the problem, in the hope that that there will be no need for a legal framework behind the Act.
39. A project led by Seafish (in association with the CMG and SAGB) is currently working on the development of best practice guidelines for handling and dispatching crustaceans across supply chain. It is not yet decided how this will be called, as it will be necessary to consider the legal connotations associated with a 'code of conduct' or 'best practice guidance'.
40. The issue of crustacean welfare will be addressed first, followed by cephalopods (both of which have been included in the Sentience Act). Cephalopods will fall under the remit of the FIAG due to the nature of these fisheries and their inclusion in the mixed Channel FMP.
41. The need for sector specific guidance is highlighted by the fact that cephalopods are landed mostly alive in pot fisheries (commonly operating along the Southeast coast of England) whereas survival rates are low in trawl fisheries (commonly operating in the Southwest).

Actions

Action no.	Action	Responsibility
9.1	Organise for the Seafish market insight team to present at the next meeting on current market driven changes in the shellfish sector and how that might impact fisheries management.	Seafish
9.2	Provide a progress update at the next meeting on engagement with DAs on getting the common shellfish FMP objectives accepted and adopted.	Seafish
9.3	Share written principles of MYS with group members.	Defra
9.4	Circulate briefing paper on issues with the process for fishery dependent data collection.	Seafish